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FROM THE FUND OF
CHARLES MINOT
CLASS OF 1828

WITH THE FRENCH IN MEXICO.

POPOCATEPETL AND IXTACCIHUATL, FROM NEAR ST. MARTIN.

WITH THE FRENCH

IN

MEXICO.

BY

J. F. ELTON,

LATE OF THE 98TH REGIMENT, AND A.D.C. TO H. E. GENERAL SIR HUGH ROSE, G.C.B., K.S.I., COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF IN INDIA (LORD STRATHNAIRN).

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PREFACE.

THE following pages consist simply of a diary carefully kept in Mexico, and put into the present form, in order to pass away idle time during a stay at the Havana and a journey up the Mississippi.

There is no pretence made to any literary merit, but the Author trusts that some little interest may be attracted by a subject upon which as yet very little is known in Europe.

The Engravings are all from sketches taken upon the spot, some of them by the Count de Montholon, an officer on the staff of General Douay, and the rest by the Author.

ST. LOUIS, MISSOURI,
March 5th, 1867.

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" Il y a des sites, des climats, des saisons, des circonstances extérieures tellement en harmonie avec certaines impressions du cœur, que la nature semble faire partie de l'âme, et l'âme de la nature, et que si on sépare la scène du drame, ou le drame de la scène, la scène se décolore et le sentiment s'évanouit.

" On ne peut bien comprendre un sentiment que dans les lieux où il fut conçu."

RAPHAEL.

WATER BATTERY, HAVANA.

CHAPTER I.

THE START.

THERE are few sports more fatiguing than a long day's wildfowl-shooting during severe weather. Cramped up in your punt, cold, tired, and with half-frozen hands and feet, you only bear up, in the hope that a good and lucky shot with the "big gun" may possibly bring you home "le Roi de la Chasse." For at this sport, more than at any other, the shooting is "jealous," and every distant report excites great speculation as to who fired it, and what it may have brought to the bag.

We were a very snug little party on board the cutter-yacht 'Z,' in and about the Scheldt, during the winter of 1865–66, and accounted for a pretty large bag of wildfowl, considering the winter was so open. What pleasant evenings those were, we passed on board! After the day's shooting, gun cleaning, and the indispensable "tub" had been got through, cannot you fancy how thoroughly contented one must feel about seven P.M.—the labour and toil of the day being over—seated down to a good dinner and a bottle of "dry," with a couple of "sworn companions," in a warm, well-lighted, almost luxurious little cabin, listening to the cold north-easter shaking the rigging overhead; and after settling the comparative merits of the shooting, and arranging the plans for the next day—over the claret—a general and cosy conversation gradually begins?

Speculations on the hunting at home, politics, racing,—most of these topics received a fair share of our attention; but what the mischief made us discuss Mexican affairs one December evening, I am almost at a loss to surmise. Perhaps it was the recollection of a certain good dinner at the 'Rag,' at which an ex-colonel of the Guards expressed his decided opinion that the Old World was used up, and nothing of real interest in the way of travelling remained to be done but to make a journey to the

Valley of the Great Lakes, and visit Popocatepetl and the Ixtaccihuatl. Besides, we had "Umbra" on board with us—not in the flesh, or in the shadow, but in the shape of his book,—and I imagine he had something to do with it.

Be that as it may, we did talk about Mexico that evening, and resumed the conversation several times before we ran up the river to Antwerp, the next week, to send our slaughtered wildfowl home by the steamer, and lay in provisions for another fortnight's cruise, as was our usual custom. During our stay there, I was infatuated enough about the question to go by rail to Brussels, and set to work to glean what information I could, regarding "le beau pays du Mexique."

On the 14th of March, the same party of three sat once again at dinner together; this time, not on board the yacht, in Dutch waters, but in Paris, and at Véfour's. Later on in the evening, one started by the train to St. Nazaire, to embark for Mexico, and the other two returned to London. I need scarcely tell you that the passenger bound across the Atlantic was myself; the conversations during the winter's shooting had at last borne their fruit.

I could hardly wish my greatest enemy a worse piece of bad luck, than to find himself compelled to sojourn for twenty-four hours at St. Nazaire. It may have improved somewhat of later days; I sin-

cerely hope it has. All rising seaport towns are naturally disagreeable resting-places, but this one is several degrees dirtier, and more thoroughly uncomfortable, than any other I have ever had the misfortune to pitch my tent in. When, added to the miseries inseparable from a filthy hotel and bad food, one has just taken leave of one's friends, and on the eve of a tolerably long voyage, I think there is a sufficient excuse for being impatient at an unpleasant delay on the very outset of the journey; and, I assure you, notwithstanding every prospect of rough weather, it was positively a feeling of relief to me, to find myself on board the good steam-ship 'Impératrice Eugénie,' with all ready for a start, on the 16th of March.

Dirty weather we did have with a vengeance, until after we ran past the Azores; but I will do the 'Impératrice' the justice to testify that she rolls about far less than most large ocean-going steamers of her class; in fact the *mal de mer* is reduced, on board of her, almost to the possible minimum; and about the third day, nearly all the passengers began to show at meals, and "do" pretty fairly.

After losing sight of the Azores the weather was fine, and even became tolerably warm, everything going on prosperously until the 31st. On that day a dreadful rumour began to circulate among the

"talent" that we had run short of coal. Unfortunately, there was no want of foundation for this unpleasant report, for before midnight we were burning wood!

Every available piece of timber on board was seized upon, even the large boom supporting the forward awning was sawn up into blocks to feed the furnaces; and a solemn sacrifice of poultry took place in order to utilize the hen-coops for the same purpose. All to no avail, for by eight o'clock the next morning the fires were out, the floats of the paddle-wheels unshipped, and our speed speedily reduced from thirteen knots an hour down to a little more than two, for of a surety the 'Impératrice' was not designed or built with a view to fast sailing under canvas.

At last we passed the island of Sombrero, a long dark slip of land, resembling an enormous whale more than anything else, then sighted the Virgin Isles; but we were certainly dead out of luck, for on the evening of the 2nd of April, the captain was obliged to lie-to with a foul wind and blowing fresh, it being quite out of the question trying to fetch St. Thomas.

In this state of affairs, the lifeboat was dispatched to find the best of her way to the port—we were some forty miles from it, I think,—with orders to send us out either a tug or more coal, and early the

next morning our spirits were greatly revived by the arrival of a steamer, for the boat had accomplished her mission; our fires were soon under weigh again, and in a few hours we were riding at anchor in the lovely bay of St. Thomas.

St. Thomas really is charming; it is absolutely a relief to eyes tired by the sameness of an Atlantic voyage, to rest on the bright pleasing landscape which breaks into view as you enter the harbour. The bay is sheltered by large hills, the town itself being built on three eminences of about an equal height, and overshadowed by a mountain, the background making the whole scene stand out in bold relief. Everywhere the tropical foliage is most luxuriant, almost as much so in fact as in the island of Ceylon, of which the palm and cocoa-nut trees growing right down to the water's edge reminded me very forcibly.

There are not many attractions or amusements on shore, and after strolling along the streets and mounting up to the castle, where the view of the harbour is worthy of a few minutes' attention, nothing much remains to be done unless you like to take a swim. The baths, for the benefit of nervous people, are carefully guarded from the attacks of sharks, being fenced in by strong palisading, and you can splash about without fear in the interior of a description of gigantic wooden box. The hotel,

by the bye, is good, and over a fish breakfast we arranged our party, to ride up from Vera Cruz to Mexico. We were altogether four in number; Colonel Boyer, *chef du cabinet* to Marshal Bazaine; the Count de Colbert, captain in the 12th Chasseurs; M. Barrés, editor of the 'Estafette,'* and myself.

The voyage continued without incident until our arrival off the Havana, on the evening of the 7th. Now at the Havana the Spanish authorities certainly succeed admirably in making themselves as annoying as possible to all steam-navigation companies, with the exception of their own. Listen to the history of our delays and misfortunes. In the first place, we were compelled to cruise about outside the harbour all that night, the port being closed at sundown. The next morning, Sunday, we steamed in and anchored near the wharf of the Compagnie Transatlantique, thinking our troubles were over. Not a bit of it. We were ordered at once into quarantine, and told that we had cholera on board. In vain our captain remonstrated, and assured the port authorities that not only had we a clean bill of health and had never even heard of cholera being either at St. Nazaire or at St. Thomas, but that we actually had not had one single case of illness what-

* A French journal published in Mexico, but since suspended by the Mexican Government, for giving its opinions too freely.

soever on board since our departure from France. It was no good. "It was Sunday," they said; "all the responsible officers were in the country—could not be found. If they even could be found, would not be disturbed. We must, therefore, at any rate, remain in quarantine until the next morning, then they would see about it," etc. etc.

The heat was terrific, not a breath of air, the sea like molten glass; and there for twenty-four long hours we stagnated on board. Finally, about ten o'clock on Monday morning, it was discovered that there was no impediment whatever to our landing, and accordingly we landed. To complete our annoyance, it rained all day, and in making an expedition to see the Captain-General's country residence, we got drenched, and on the whole were too bad-tempered and far too damp to appreciate the beauties of the Havana. In fact, we were more than half pleased to be off again, with the prospect of Vera Cruz before us in three days' time at the most.

The next Friday evening, while we were all at dinner, we heard the rattling of the anchor chain, and going on deck found ourselves lying between the fort of St. Juan d'Ulloa and the town of Vera Cruz. I can hardly describe to you my first impressions of the view: they have changed considerably since that evening. There was a wonderful sunset, such a one as you only see in tropical

countries, and then not very often. Vera Cruz rejoices in many steeples and domes, and they shone out clear and white, like marble, against the deep blue of the mountains far away inland. In the distance, the last rays of the sun faintly lit up the snow-peak of Orizaba, whilst on our left lay long, dangerous-looking, black reefs, half covered by the tide, the castle of St. Juan d'Ulloa looming darkly in the half-light; while just visible in the distance was "La Isla de los Sacrificios,"—the wreck of a large vessel, driven on the sands by a strong 'norte," standing out in black and ominous effect, and almost intercepting the view.

Mind you, I don't for a moment wish to idealize Vera Cruz into either an extraordinary or a charming place; it has more than its fair share of drawbacks on landing, even leaving the "vómito" out of the question. As in most Eastern towns, so in this country, one is soon disenchanted. Narrow, dirty streets; crowds of "Zopilotes;" vultures, privileged and protected by the law, hopping about in the open and pestiferous gutters; a disagreeable deadly air of decay about the whole place; and the most uncomfortable hotels conceivable, tend rapidly to make one change one's opinion, that "really, after all, Vera Cruz is not so bad a place."

Probably my first impressions were due, more to the time and circumstances of the day than the ac-

tualities of the view. Of course everybody was in a hurry and bustle to get ashore; but had it not been for the firmness of Colonel Boyer, we should have been again put into quarantine, the Spanish steamer having reported that we had arrived at the Havana with cholera on board. Fortunately for us, the authorities here listened to reason, and just as night began to fall, we found ourselves standing on the mole of Vera Cruz. In Mexico at last!

ALARM BELL, MORO FORT, HAVANA.

PEAK OF ORIZABA.

CHAPTER II.

A RIDE UP THE COUNTRY.

VERA CRUZ was a very Babel. Zouaves, Turcos, Chasseurs d'Afrique, and Nubians—belonging to the Egyptian Legion—were bustling about, and hurrying their way through the crowds of Mexicans, Indians, cargadores,* arrieros,† and impatient travellers, who, on the eve of the departure of the mail-steamer, invariably block up the *zaguan*, or portal, of the Custom-house; for the homeward-bound passengers had been impatiently awaiting

* Cargadores,—porters. † Arrieros,—mule-cart drivers.

our arrival in the 'Impératrice,' and were more than anxious to turn their backs on the town, and the chances of yellow-fever. Neither, I think, were the invalids and time-expired men sorry to be off. They bore all the unmistakeable signs of having made many a long and weary march in Mexico, and their travel-stained uniforms made the white dresses of the Egyptian soldiers stand out in striking contrast. These same Egyptians have garrisoned Vera Cruz for about four years, being lent to the French Government by the Viceroy of Egypt. They are exceedingly clean and smart soldiers, nor in one instance have they failed to behave admirably before the enemy; in fact, they are more dreaded in the "Tierra Caliente" by the guerilla bands than most of the other troops who have had the bad fortune to be garrisoned in this unhealthy climate. Perhaps offenders have a wholesome recollection of their vengeance, when they sallied forth from Tejeria to kill every man in a village hard by, where one of their comrades had been assassinated; and I imagine it will be many a long day before the freebooters will venture to dwell again in this place of ill omen.

The hotels were all hurry and confusion; each bedroom held some three or four travellers, and baggage was mixed up in the most despairing manner. Thanks, however, to the hospitality of

Mr. Coulombeix, the Intendant Militaire, who gave us rooms in his house, we escaped all these miseries. On the whole, though, Vera Cruz was decidedly too hot and too overcrowded to remain in longer than possible, so the second morning saw our party off by the "Imperial Mexican Railroad" to Paso del Macho, a distance of some fifty miles, and the terminus at present of the line, which, when completed, is to run to the capital.

Paso del Macho is like all temporary towns that spring up along new lines of rail, flourish awhile, and then collapse as the line is opened further. Everything about the place has a temporary air. The hotels—and they are many in number, and all bad,—being built of a combination of planking and sheet-iron, are dismal indeed to gaze upon, and productive of misgivings as to the good cheer to be found within their boards. Enter, and immediately your forebodings will be realized—for you will find the interior dirty, and the food bad; the heat terrific, and a very plague of Egypt with regard to flies. Fortunately, we found an escort of Chasseurs d'Afrique waiting the arrival of Colonel Boyer, so were not delayed very long; and what with arranging one's kit and saddle, etc., got through the day pretty fairly.

In the evening we strolled down to one of the *fondas** in the town to see the Indian population

* A 'fonda' is a sort of eating and drinking booth, wayside tavern.

dance the "Jarabe," and were much amused. It is a dance peculiar to the Terre Chaude, far from ungraceful, and resembling a slow sort of Sir Roger de Coverley; however, the heat was so stifling, and the place so crowded, that we did not remain many minutes.

Don't you imagine, though, that we slept peacefully in the Hôtel Universel. The flies never sleep at Paso del Macho, and, as soon as night falls, voracious mosquitoes sally forth by myriads.

As far as I can remember, we mustered the next morning in rather bad tempers and not very fresh for the long march we had before us, some ten leagues to Cordova. How glad we were to find ourselves at the top of the Chiquihuite Pass, and on the borders of the "Tierra Templada," looking down on the steaming plains and tropical vegetation of the "Terre Chaude," and the swift torrent that dashes along the bed of the ravine, spanned by an old Spanish bridge!

Although the change of climate was visibly felt, still our march was hot and dusty, the road bad and very difficult, even for our lightly-laden *chariots de parc*, it being very nearly four P.M. before we arrived at Cordova, a dull little town springing up from amidst a perfect wilderness of tropical vegetation, and towered over in the distance by the lofty snow-clad peak of Orizaba.

I forgot to tell you that along the road of that hot day's march, we had passed, every now and then, the works of the railroad company. Certainly, when completed, this will be one of the most marvellous lines of the century. You cannot imagine the difficulties of country to contend with; even at the very outset the pass of Chiquihuite appears impracticable, and there are far worse obstacles to be surmounted before arriving in the valley of Mexico; but the line has been most carefully traced out, and with money—which, unfortunately, appears too scarce at present—there can be no doubt that railroad communication between Vera Cruz and the capital will eventually be an accomplished fact; and that it will pay in the end there can be hardly a question to any one who has seen the heavily laden convoys of merchandise that labour along, drawn with difficulty by ten, fifteen, even twenty or more mules up the infamous road from the principal seaport in the country to Mexico.

From Cordova,—which quiet little town appears to have been shaken almost out of shape by an undue share of earthquakes, still travelling under the shadow of the snow peak of Orizaba, which certainly comes up to, if it does not even exceed, one's preconceived notions of its imposing grandeur,—we made a dusty journey the next day as far as Orizaba. This was one of those tantalizing marches

during which you catch continual glimpses of the town you wish to reach, imagine your day's work nearly at an end, and still mile after mile hardly seem to bring you much nearer. Fortunately all marches come to an end, and late in the afternoon we rode up the long main street of Orizaba, and set to work to find our lodgings for the night. The town has nothing particular about it, and leaves no great impression on one; nevertheless, the climate is perfection, and after the oppressive, hot, unwholesome atmosphere of Vera Cruz, the change is absolutely a luxury.

On the 18th we made a march of eight leagues, which brought us to Aculcingo, a lonely scattered village, situated at the foot of the Cumbres, the formidable mountain barrier closing in the valley of Orizaba, and held in abhorrence by all arrieros, diligence-drivers, and travellers in general. It is, notwithstanding, an obstacle to be surmounted in order to reach Mexico, that is, until the railway company completes its line through the Maltrata Pass, lying at the foot of the Black Mountain and the Peak, and involving a circuit increasing the distance at least twofold.

The next morning, at five o'clock, we started to ride slowly up the winding road,* and at last reaching the summit of the Grandes Cumbres, halted

* It has some thirty turns, if I remember rightly.

to give our baggage and rear-guard the time to rejoin us. The morning air was bitterly cold, and we were obliged to walk about to keep ourselves warm, but the view was magnificent. The fine valley of Orizaba lay beneath us, and the morning sun dyed the snow-clad peak with the most brilliant hues, whilst immediately below our feet were the waggons toiling up the steep ascent, and the diligence, on its road to Mexico, crawling along with difficulty, although drawn by an incredible number of mules. When our rear-guard had arrived and rested a short time, we descended into a wild, highland-looking valley, thickly wooded, where numerous wooden crosses testify to the many advantages the spot offers to guerilla bands,* who invariably make their head-quarters not far from the high-road traversing the pass. Crossing a small stone bridge, known as the Puente Colorado, spanning the torrent in the bottom, we again mounted a repetition of the winding road, and another formidable ascent, although this time it was fortunately not quite so steep or so long as the previous one. This brought us to the summit of the Second Cumbres, on the broad plateau beyond. Once fairly on the level, we soon pushed on to breakfast at the Cañada, a prettily situated little village, passing along the road-

* Wherever a traveller has been murdered, the Mexicans always erect a wooden cross by the roadside.

side more hares than I ever before have seen in a day. From thence we kept on as far as the town of Palmas, the road being worse than ever, and deep in fine sand; however, at the end of our thirteen leagues we found a clean, comfortable hotel, and after our late experience in this line, that alone made ample amends to us for the heat and toil of the day.

The 20th, *en route* again, and eight leagues to Acatzingo, a small town with a very large plaza, a very small fountain, and an inordinate number of churches, all of them bearing evident signs of having suffered severely from the earthquake which occurred a few months before our arrival. The 21st, we did nine leagues to Amozoc, and on the 22nd passed through the fine city of Puebla, halting a short distance beyond it at the Molino del Puente de Méjico, but still passing several hours in the city, where there are many evident traces to be seen of the hard fighting that took place during the siege directed by the Marshal Forey.

Puebla was originally one of the richest cities belonging to the old clerical party, and abounds in churches and convents—many of them now turned into barracks and military storehouses,—indeed, the first view of its numerous domes and towers remind you at once of some Eastern city; and if you could

only for a moment suppress the surrounding hills and the distant glimpse of the snow mountains, Popocatepetl and Ixtaccihuatl, half shrouded in mist, it would resemble strikingly another large city, many, many thousands of miles away, that also has undergone its fair share of sieges, Lucknow.

On the right as you enter by the Garita* de Vera Cruz, the fort of Guadalupe (at the unsuccessful assault of which, during the attack on the city by General Lorencez, the French lost heavily), and the fort of Loretto, constructed on two eminences, appear completely to command the place; nevertheless, the attack at the siege under Marshal Forey was commenced from the opposite side, beyond the range of these forts, and directed against the outlying churches and buildings, each in itself representing a separate work, situated to the right and left of the road to Mexico. And this proved successful, for the Guadalupe and the Loretto were eventually taken possession of without firing a shot.

The 22nd was a Sunday, and the streets were crowded with people, Mexicans in their best sombreros, Austrians, Hulans, Indians bringing fruit into market, and pretty, graceful little women in black mantillas hurrying to Mass—for Puebla, and I think with justice, makes a boast of the beauty of

* Garita,—gate of entry, post of the municipal custom-houses.

its fair sex,—rendering it quite a difficulty to reach the plaza.

Leaving our horses at one corner of the square, we walked along under the arcades and entered the great cathedral, forming an entire side of the large plaza, and one of the most imposing religious edifices in the country. The decorations are magnificent, but in good taste, nor does effect appear to be strained for overmuch; indeed, I do not think that the reverential feelings of the "religio loci" can fail to arise in one's mind, as one thinks of the brave old warriors who fought with cross and sword to conquer Mexico for old Spain, and left such lasting memorials of their perseverance and faith.

After stopping for a few moments to look at the Penitencier and Santa Inés, two large buildings just before arriving at the Garita de Méjico, almost entirely destroyed by the French batteries, we rode up the Cerro San Juan, a hill at a short distance from the gates, commanding a fine view of the city, and where Marshal Forey established his headquarters during the siege. By this time it was getting late, and cantering on we arrived at the Mill with good appetites for a rather late breakfast.

The march of the 23rd brought us to San Martin, and the 24th to Rio Frio, the highest point be-

tween Vera Cruz and Mexico, where we were glad to dine in a small room warmed by a huge pine log-fire, for the cold was intense, and there was even a strong frost during the night.

During these last two days we had been gradually circling round the great snow-mountains, the Popocatepetl and Ixtaccihuatl,* towering over the Valley of Mexico. I confess myself incapable of picturing them to you, and I am sure you will fail to realize the impression their wild and savage grandeur made upon us all. They rise suddenly out of a low mountain-range, their summits covered with eternal snow, and their feet clothed with dense masses of dark-green pine forest. At a distance their slopes appear even and regular, but on nearing the Ixtaccihuatl, and looking from "Puente Tesmelucan," near Rio Frio, the dark black ravines, rending the sides of the mountain, show out in deep shadow against the contrast of the pure, shining snow.

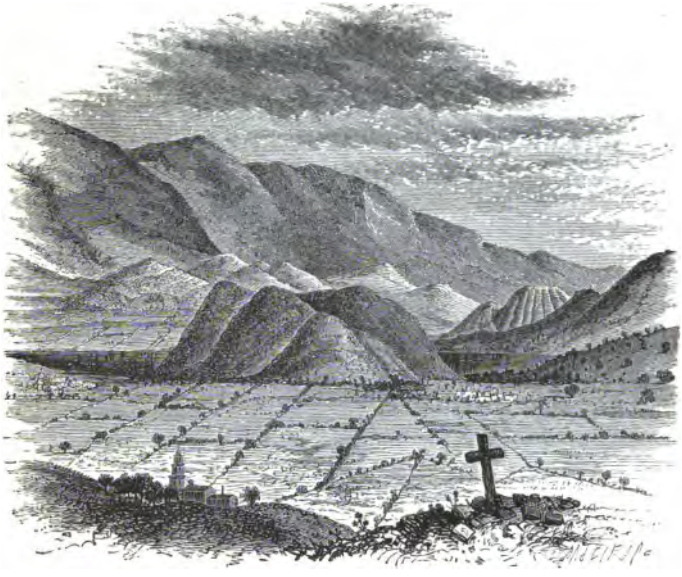
Seen from the Valley of Mexico, this last mountain bears, with the assistance of a little imagination, a curious resemblance to the form of a female figure in repose; indeed, by the Aztecs the "white woman" was regarded as the mysterious deity who presided over the destinies of Mexico. I wonder whether in the old days she ever pictured to herself an Austrian Emperor and a French

* Ixtaccihuatl means 'white woman.'

army governing the Valley of the Lakes. I fancy not.

From Rio Frio we descended into the Valley of Mexico, and the third day, the 27th of April, following the road between the two great lakes of Chalco and Tezcoco, we arrived at the Garita of the capital.

AUSTRIAN HULAN. MEXICAN LEVY.



VALLEY OF MEXICO: DESCENT FROM RIO FRIO.

CHAPTER III.

MEXICO.

The Calzada is the name of the long straight road passing between Chalco and Tezcoco; it is constructed upon a large embankment, in existence as far back as the days of the Spanish invasion, and although the face of the scene has been vastly changed by the receding of the waters, nevertheless when you first discover Mexico, stretching, one might almost fancy, far along the surface of the lakes, possibly you may be on the very spot from which Ferdinand Cortés gazed with an exult-

ing heart on the wonders of the ancient city. To the right, a curiously-shaped rock, surmounted by a church, attracts your attention immediately, from its very prominent position. This is the famous shrine of Nuestra Señora de Guadalupe—the patron of the country,—and the little scattered town lying at its foot is the Villa de Guadalupe, the resort of the thousands of pilgrims who, from all parts of the empire, arrive annually to pay their devotions to the miraculous picture of the Virgin, suspended over the principal altar, and the object of the greatest veneration to all Mexicans. In the background, behind the lofty public buildings and cathedral of Mexico, rise a fine chain of mountains, the Sierra de Tacubaya, and on the left, numerous clumps of trees only half conceal the pretty neighbouring towns and villages that lie thickly scattered all around the suburbs,—the hill and palace of Chapultepec, towering over the scene, alone interrupting the level and fertile plains that gradually rise and form the slopes of the far-off blue hills bordering the valley.

Arriving, as we did, by the Peñon Viejo, the many towers and domes of the innumerable religious edifices, the large extent of the city, the wide-spreading waters of the lakes, the pure clear air and delightful temperature of the climate, above all, perhaps, the association of ideas,—produce a series of impressions decidedly in favour of Mexico.

"We think how great had been our bliss
If Heaven had but assigned us
To live and die in scenes like this
With friends we've left behind us!"

Nor are you deceived, when, having passed the Garita and riding down the long avenue of trees approaching the suburbs, you find yourself—after traversing a few streets—fairly landed on the grand plaza and under the shadow of the imposing cathedral, occupying the ancient site of the great Aztec Teocalli.

The scene is busy and gay: men, women, and children of all shades, from the pure-blooded Indian to the pale-faced Mexican beauty, hurry and throng under the arcades selling and buying fruit, vegetables, trinkets, and "Palais-Royal" jewellery, keeping up the whole time a most incessant clatter of tongues. The colour is very effective; the Indian women in bright dresses and still more dazzling zarapes* contrast strikingly with the sombre attire of the Mexican ladies, who with black mantillas gracefully thrown over their masses of dark hair, and cunningly closed over the lower part of the face, disclose just enough beauty to make one wish that a passing gust of wind might disarrange those careless and enticing folds, and reveal a little

* A 'zarape' is a finely-woven blanket of variegated colours, worn by the Mexicans somewhat after the fashion of a Scotch plaid.

more of their pretty faces and neat figures to the passers-by.

Without an exception the fair sex walk magnificently, and have that thorough-bred air which so generally characterizes women of Spanish race; they dress, besides, with exquisite taste, and their black eyes and long eyelashes go far to compensate for the slovenliness and dirt of the Indian maidens, who appear to be born with a natural antipathy to water and cleanliness.

I must confess that I differ very materially with Cortés on the question of Aztec beauty; either the race has wonderfully degenerated since the days of the conquest, or he possibly may have been influenced by the charms of Malinche, when he praised the good looks of the Indian women. At the present time there is little in their favour; they have coarse hair, large, heavy features, and short, clumsy figures,—in fact, none of the refined traits you naturally look for in the fair sex. Their dress, certainly, is not wanting in originality, and they evince considerable taste in the bright combinations of colour they appear to delight in, and the long plaits of black hair they invariably wear; but still they are far from prepossessing in general appearance.

There is one feature of dress purely Mexican, and worn by all classes—the *rebozo*. There is no portion of ladies' apparel in Europe, as far as I

know, answering to this. It is neither a shawl nor a cache-nez, but perhaps something between the two; a long piece of heavily-woven silk or cotton, generally of a dark colour, and about a yard wide and from four to five in length, worn thrown over the head and shoulders, with the ends hanging down the back,—it produces rather a novel and original effect. Mexicans consider it extremely becoming, but I cannot say that I agree with them on this particular point, although their taste upon such matters is generally unimpeachable.

Let me, though, do justice to the national costume of the sterner sex. Fortunately, that abomination of the old world, the inevitable chimney-pot hat, does not threaten to supersede the broad-brimmed sombrero with its heavy "torsada"* of gold or silver lace, neither do mathematically-cut frock-coats interfere with the short jackets and loose flowing trousers, covered with silver coins or studs, the Mexican exquisite delights to wear. Decidedly it is refreshing to find originality even in dress; and the cavalier "got up" for his ride in the "paseo," mounted on an active, well-bred little horse of about fourteen hands, his saddle massively mounted in silver, with leopard-skin "chivaras"† attached to

* The 'torsada' is simply a cord covered with gold or silver lace, and worn round the sombrero, after the fashion of a hatband.

† The 'chivaras' are spatterdashes, worn over the trousers when

the cantle, and a zarape of brilliant colours hanging in long folds over the pommel, riding with the greatest ease and perfection, would, I am certain, meet with approbation were he suddenly dropped in Rotten Row.

The Indian wears the same costume as the Mexican, the only difference being that his sombrero is made of straw, very battered and rather dirty, and his jacket, when he has one, is generally of leather, as are his overalls, left unbuttoned at the side, in order to show the white cotton trouser invariably worn beneath them.

But I linger too long under these arcades forming the two sides of the plaza. Thanks to the Imperial *régime*, the centre of this great square is now charmingly laid out with broad, well-kept paths, a profusion of flowers, and several fountains, in good taste and keeping, although not pretentious, and here hundreds of people stroll every evening to listen to the Austrian band. The palace forms the third side, and the cathedral the fourth.

The former building has nothing to recommend it beyond its size, and bears the most commonplace whitewashed appearance possible. Not so the cathedral, which is sufficiently imposing to attract one's attention, although it is neither so well-built

riding in dirty weather, made of deer-skins, goat-skins, etc., with the hair turned on the outside.

nor so well-situated as that of Puebla. On one of the terraces, and resting against the wall, is the famous "Aztec Calendar-stone," one of the few relics of the ancient country that has escaped the fanaticism of the Spanish priests, who appear to have considered themselves engaged upon a holy work whenever they could destroy any object, however precious, connected with the former religion of the great city.

Leaving the Plaza by the Calle de Plateros, and following the Calle San Francisco—the continuation of the Plateros—you find yourself in the Old Bond Street of the city, and I can assure you the shops would pass a very good muster against many in the Old World. In the Calle San Francisco is the principal hotel—the Hotel Iturbide,—formerly the residence of the unlucky emperor of that name, who was shot by his countrymen at Victoria, in the State of Tamaulipas; for the Mexicans have an expeditious and time-honoured habit of cutting short the career of any obnoxious public character, either by the bullet or the rope, that has not at all lost favour in their eyes of late years; neither does any abatement of the custom appear probable at the present time.

As far as accommodation goes, this hotel is tolerably comfortable, but the noise is insupportable, and continues night and day, for it is the head-quarters of the diligences which rattle in and out of the patio incessantly. There is another and less

pretentious hotel, the Bazar, quieter and far better kept; but as you value your constitution, let me counsel you that there is only one restaurant in Mexico where you can be sure of a good dinner; that kept by Fulcheri, in the Calle de Refugio. All the others are a snare and delusion, and to be studiously avoided. However, if behindhand in their *cuisine*, the Mexicans are in advance of many European cities with regard to their baths, for in every small town you will find at least one Casa de Baños, and in Puebla and Mexico their number is legion, all of them being clean and neatly kept, and the tariff exceedingly low.

Decidedly you can amuse yourself in this capital, and although the resources are not so numerous as in the cities of the Old World, nevertheless there are several boasting at least of the charm of novelty. The Alameda, a beautifully laid-out public garden, shaded by magnificent trees, is crowded with the *beau monde* in the morning from eight to nine; and two or three times a week the Austrian bands play round the large fountain in the centre of the enclosure. The Paseo de Bucarelli, extending from the Plaza de Toros for at least three miles, to the church of the Piedad, is a famous carriage-drive. On either side of this road is a ride for equestrians, and you may canter till your horse has had enough, shadowed from the sun by the fine trees which line

the avenue. Every evening this is crowded with rich equipages, and the horsemen are so numerous that you frequently find it a difficulty to get along; but Sunday is *par excellence* the day; then everybody in Mexico consider themselves bound to appear, and the crush is positively alarming. Again, there is the Paseo Viejo, on the opposite side of the city, following the banks of the canal leading into the Lake of Chalco, by which the Indians bring fruit and vegetables from the direction of Cuernavaca, for the consumption of the capital. This is a charming drive or ride, but is now almost deserted for the more fashionable Bucarelli; still there is a season—I believe during Lent—when the Viejo is considered a fashionable paseo, and the rival avenue is left almost empty and deserted.

On Sunday afternoon all the world flock to the Plaza de Toros, the Spanish taste for bull fighting being very strongly developed in their descendants the Mexicans, who work themselves up into a curious state of excitement once a week over this their national amusement. I confess my sympathies go with the bull, and all my commiseration for the wretched horses; still it is impossible to ignore the merits and the adroitness of the quadrilla.*

Beyond the bull-ring lies a large garden fitted up with kiosks and summer-houses, known as the

* Quadrilla.—This term comprises all the men who assist at a bull-fight, matadores, chulos, picadores, lazos, etc. etc.

Tivoli del Eliseo, and here it is the delight of the sterner sex to breakfast or dine, away from the heat and dust of the city. This and another establishment of the same kind, the Tivoli de San Cosmé, are in fact the Richmond and Greenwich of Mexico. You can get a capital dinner, and the wines are excellent, but the prices are fabulous; from £3 to £4 a head, without any wine, is by no means their highest charge; and a good deal of money can be consumed at either of these two resorts in an incredibly short space of time.

EL CABALLERO.

VALLEY OF MEXICO, FROM ABOVE CHAPULTEPEC.

CHAPTER IV.

"LES ENVIRONS."

THERE is one great advantage with regard to Mexico—all the places of interest around it lie within the distance of an easy ride; and provided you "turn out" early enough in the morning, you can "do"—I believe that is the orthodox expression—the environs and be back in time for a late breakfast, before there is too much sun or dust to make it unpleasant. Suppose we try the experiment!

Following the Calle San Francisco, and leaving

the shady, cool walk of the Alameda on our right, passing the statue erected in bygone times to some king of Spain—whose name I really do not recollect, more shame to me!—and the Plaza de Toros, let us ride down the Emperor's Road towards the palace of Chapultepec. At the end of the paseo and beyond the Tivoli is the residence of the Marshal Bazaine, the palace of Buena Vista—a fine building, beyond a doubt the most habitable-looking in the city of Mexico, the grounds before it being laid out with great taste, and the display of flowers and tropical trees charming. Those Spahis loitering about in front of the great iron gates belong to the Marshal's escort, and attract no little attention from the passing Indians, who invariably halt to inspect them, and wonder how, in the name of all that is strange, those Arabs can be here, and where in the deuce they could possibly have come from.

The road is good, the best one in Mexico, and was constructed by the orders of Maximilian, in order to demonstrate the possibility of making macadamized communications in the country. Of course it has succeeded, but previously there were people to be found actually sufficiently prejudiced to assert that such an undertaking was impracticable and reckless. There is little doubt that the Mexicans object most strongly to any innovation

or change likely, even in the smallest degree, to encroach upon their old-established habits and customs,—much as they delight in a change of ministry or a succession of pronunciamientos,—and even railroads have been merely accepted by the majority of the population as a necessary evil, not to mention M. Binel's steam ice-making machine, the greatest possible boon during summer months to society at large; this was positively regarded at first as a work of the devil, and exorcized accordingly. Still it was a long time before many people could overcome their prejudices sufficiently to admit into their houses ice made by the action of fire!

Cantering on, we pass to the left a large establishment of swimming-baths, for horses as well as for men, as the signboard informs us. I have never been under its roof, but the water is tepid, and rises from a natural spring hard by. Whether it is supposed to be efficacious either for equine disorders or the "many ills that flesh is heir to," I really cannot say; at any rate, its renown is not very far spread.

Before our horses' heads, right in front of us, emerges from a large park covered with gigantic trees, a colossal rock, surmounted by a castle,—just such a castle as in bygone days, after reading some exciting fairy tale, you may have pictured to yourself as the stronghold of the Red-Cross Knight, from whence he sallies forth with confident step,

bearing the badge of his ladye love, and impatient for the fray, to give battle to the hitherto invulnerable giant who haunts the deepest recesses of the forest, and holds in durance vile that fair princess whose gallant followers he has overcome by foul sorceries.

This is Chapultepec. Leaving our horses at the gates, we pass the Austrian sentry, and find ourselves walking under the shadow of those vast, mournful-looking trees,—their wide-spreading branches over-weighted and borne down by the long, drooping Spanish moss,—whose fame has spread far and wide.

Ah! if they could only tell us half the scenes that have passed beneath their venerable shade! Here, upon this rock, was the sacred grove, the "high-place" of the Aztec priests. Under those very trees walked Guatimozin, his mind oppressed with instinctive forebodings of evil concerning the white men who had landed in his country, when the procession of augurs arrived to counsel him that the results obtained from the human sacrifices proved that the strangers must be invited up to Mexitli. And since that day, Spanish Viceroys have held their court here; the Americans have taken the position by storm; a military college has been established within its walls; now it is the palace of an Austrian Emperor of Mexico; and it

is impossible to foretell what future destiny may be yet in store for "The Hill of the Grasshoppers."

From its position—commanding the most magnificent view of the whole valley, the Popocatepetl and the White Woman—this castle on the rock will always have an imposing effect at first sight; yet, as a piece of architecture, little can be said in its favour. It is a long, rambling, two-storied building, terminated towards the city side by two badly-proportioned towers, unequal in size, and quite destroying the *ensemble;* and besides has, to my thinking, been more than ever disfigured by the glaring colours with which its walls have been painted. The Emperor has completely restored the interior, and as a summer palace it must be indeed a charming retreat, for I do not fancy the view from the terraces or the shady avenues of the park can be surpassed in beauty in any part of the world. With the fertile valley, the city, and the great lakes at one's feet, the whole scene bounded in by barriers of lofty blue mountains, and afar off the two majestic snow peaks towering over the whole landscape, one may well forget the turmoils raging throughout the country, and feel the ambition of governing so fair a land as the scene stretching away far and wide beneath. Turning our backs on Chapultepec, we see an irregularly-built town on our left. This is Tacubaya, and here all the men with heavy

purses build villas and country houses, to which they retire during the summer months, when the "season" of Mexico is over. It is really a very pretty place, and the buildings lie scattered picturesquely and peeping out from amidst the bright green foliage of the large clumps of trees; some of the casas being built far away upon the distant slopes leading from the valley towards the foot of the hills.

Here the Rothschild of these parts, Mr. Barron, an Englishman, has a country house, pronounced to be in perfect taste. Close to this is another mansion, of about equal size, the property of Escandon, the projector of the railroad from Vera Cruz to Mexico. There are plenty more of such residences, but the grounds are apparently badly looked after, and there is a luxuriance of weeds and thick grass sprouting up upon the carriage-drives and walks sufficient to send a right-minded gardener clean out of his senses for the rest of his life. There is one exception to this rule, the Casa Amarilla, clean and nicely kept; although not by a long way the richest or the largest of the Tacubaya villas, it has the credit of being the most hospitable, and I know many who, to spend another day or two under its roof, would gladly wish the Fates to conduct them once again into the "Great Valley."

Clearing Tacubaya, and crossing the line of rail running to San Angel—another small town, with nothing particular about it,—we follow the rather unpleasantly dusty bye-roads, and skirting broad fields planted with the maguey*—for the amount of pulqué produced in the Valley is very considerable,—eventually arrive at the Piedad, a small, straggling village, springing up around the church and large convent of the same name. Once this was an influential and flourishing shrine, but latterly, and since the crusade of the Liberals against the Church party, has quite fallen into decay, and now bears a most depressing aspect of approaching ruin and desertion. Here, at the Piedad, is, if you recollect, the termination of the Paseo de Bucarelli; and as it will barely repay us to make a halt at Miscoac—once renowned for its fragrant flowers and prettily-laid-out gardens, now, unfortunately, from want of attention, losing many of their attractions, and half overgrown with wild roses and briars,—a smart canter, under the long shady avenue of green trees, past the Garita and the Great Fountains, will bring us back to our starting-point at the Plaza de Toros.

One more ride, leaving by the same road, towards

* The 'maguey' is the large, broad-leaved aloe, from which is extracted a white, milky juice. This, when fermented, is 'pulqué,' the wine of the country, and by no means disagreeable.

Chapultepec again, and we shall have seen all that is most interesting in the environs. This time, turn to the right, and follow the road leading to the Hacienda de Teja, now the residence of the Emperor. It is the most perfect road for an evening canter imaginable. You meet hardly anybody to interrupt your *tête-à-tête*, should you be "in waiting" on the fair sex, which I trust may be your case, should you ever wander so far from home as into the Valley of Mexico. Large masses of rose-bushes mark out the path on either side, and the branches of the overhanging trees are so thickly interlaced, that, even on the very brightest day, there is always a deep shadow over the long, pleasant avenues leading to the Hacienda—a fine old building, the gardens and courtyard literally overflowing with flowers and fragrance. A little further on, passing through the large portals of the Teja, we are at the foot of Chapultepec.

Riding under one of the arches of the fine, though now time-worn, old aqueduct,—built by the Spaniards to conduct the pure water from the foot of the hills into the city, and still serving for the same purpose,—skirting the boundary walls of the Palace, we pass the large Park that stretches away to a considerable distance, and then mount the high ground sloping up towards the mountains. Here we are on the site of the last decisive engagement

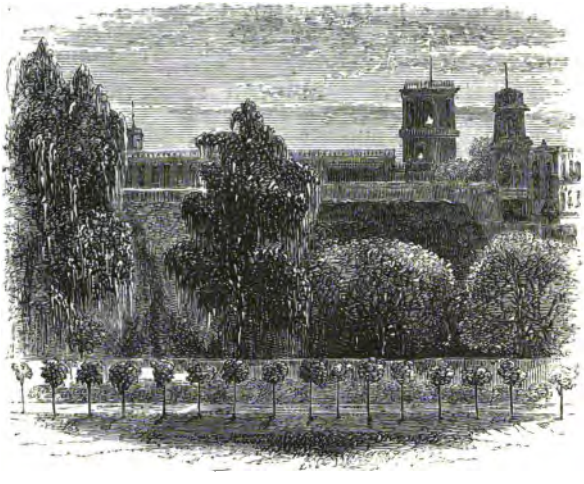
fought between the United States' troops and the Mexicans, the result of which virtually placed the capital in the power of General Scott. Here, too, almost upon the same spot, was the last struggle between Liberal and Church party, after which, Juarez found himself at the head of affairs, and the winning party disgraced themselves by behaving with the greatest barbarity.

Keep the road to the right, and an uncommonly rough and awkward one it is, and at last we find before us a large, dismal-looking, old convent, apparently in the last stage of decay. Riding past the few adobe* huts scattered around its walls, on the main road lies a small chapel, overshadowed by a colossal tree, venerable in appearance, and its branches literally choked up with long, drooping festoons of Spanish moss. Leave your horse to one of the Indians loitering about the old worm-eaten wooden gate, enter the grounds, and let us halt for an instant under the tree. It is the Arbol de la Noche Triste. After his retreat from Mexico—after losing nearly all his best men in that dark, wild, midnight fight along the long, dismal dyke, where the bridges were cut, and all the warriors of Guatimozin attacked him by myriads, not only upon the causeway itself, but from boats and rafts upon the lake—mustering the few followers who,

* Adobe,—mud bricks dried in the sun.

against such desperate odds, had succeeded in forcing their way through,—here, under these very branches, the stout heart of even Ferdinand Cortés failed him, and "he wept."

Truly the fate of the Aztec kings was in the balances on that night, and not much was required to weigh them down, or to make that defeat decisive against the handful of brave Spaniards, who fought with and for the sign of the Cross.



CHAPULTEPEC.

HACIENDA AND CERRO OF SANTA ISABEL.

CHAPTER V.

OLLA PODRIDA.

THE rainy season in Mexico—I speak of the Valley—begins about the second week in May; and for some time previous to the commencement of it, a general fear of inundation prevails throughout the city. Nor is it astonishing, for after about a couple of heavy downfalls, the streets are nearly knee-deep in water; nay, more, the very courtyards of the houses become, for the time, miniature Chalcos; and I well remember the evening when, in order to effect a passage from our rooms to the *salle à manger*, we were

compelled to hire stalwart aguadores* to carry us "pickaback" across the patio† of the Iturbide.

It follows evidently, that when the rain commences in real earnest, the attractions of Mexico diminish; still, to us, the time flew quickly, for hospitality is certainly the order of the day in this city. Messrs. Graham, Greaves, and Co. rivalled with Mr. Newbold in giving us the best of dinners; and at the Mondays of M. Friant—the *intendant en chef* of the French army, one found "all the world and his brother"—to say nothing of those friendly little dinners *à la maison des Quatre Lapins*, where we passed many a pleasant evening, chatting over old days in China in 1860, Yuen-min-Yuen, dragons, enamels, Tartars, and loot.

And besides, we had to make our preparations for a start, for we were in daily expectation of the departure of a convoy for the North, and it was not the custom of the French to give a very long warning.

On arriving at Mexico, I had presented the letters, etc., I had brought from Europe, to the Marshal Bazaine, and requested his permission to join the Division of General Douay, then at Saltillo and Monterey. This was immediately granted me, and I was directed to hold myself in readiness to leave with De Colbert by the first opportunity.

* Aguadores,—the water-carriers of the city.

† Patio,—courtyard.

About noon on the 14th of May, the order arrived for a start the next morning at five o'clock, and we were all hurry and bustle, leaving extra baggage behind us, compressing our kits as much as possible, taking leave of our friends, and going through the usual turmoil and rush of a last day. A farewell dinner with D'Hendecourt at the 'Quatre Lapins,' followed by a pleasant evening at Magnan's, and we bid adieu to civilization for a time.

In the morning, long before Mexico was out of bed, we were well on the road towards the North, and halfway to our first halt, Tlalnepantla. Fortunately we had no rain until the afternoon; but about four o'clock down it came in torrents, and the next morning the roads were deep in black mud, through which the heavily-laden waggons toiled with evident difficulty; and the mules required constant volleys of anathemas levelled at them, both in Spanish and French, to keep them at all up to the mark. The march was short, but it was late before we arrived at the small town of Cautitlan, and painfully evident to us all, that if the wet weather lasted a few days longer, a breakdown was inevitable. However, we were a very pleasant little mess together—Dupeyron, the commandant of the convoy, and Carrère, both captains in the Bataillon d'Afrique, de Colbert, and myself; and as *chef de popote* Carrère was indefatigable. There

were also about a hundred men of the Belgian corps attached to our convoy, but their officers kept themselves to themselves, and we did not see very much of them. An endless line of carts, and a force of about a hundred men belonging to different regiments—convalescents and detached men rejoining their corps—completed the composition of Dupeyron's command, and an uncommonly annoying one it must have been to him, I should fancy. I do not think anybody envied him his charge.

On the 20th, with great difficulty, the rain pouring in torrents, we dragged slowly through about five leagues of black, tenacious, clayey mud, and reached the post of Arroyo Zarco, just before dark. We were more fortunate than our unlucky rear-guard; they passed the night in a wretched wayside tumble-down old fonda, and did not arrive until late the next morning. Of course a halt was unavoidable, and in the Hotel de las Diligencias we passed a long, stupid day, only rendered bearable by writing letters for the next mail, and smoking innumerable pipes of the inestimable tobacco still remaining to us out of the store we had laid in at the Havana.

The French soldier is really admirable under evil circumstances; however much rain, mud, or dust may have provoked his anger during the day's march, once that over, he is again gay and cheery,

smokes his short black pipe, drinks his *goutte* of aguardiente, and "mocks himself" of everything in general. All day long, between the down-pouring of the rain, the "zephyrs," stripped to the waist, washed themselves in the shallow river that runs through Arroyo Zarco, and kept up an incessant fire of jokes, intermingled with loud peals of laughter, thoroughly succeeding in astonishing the damp, dismal-looking Mexicans, shivering under cover of their zarapes, who congregated under the shelter of the hotel walls, waiting for the arrival of the diligence.

Let me, while we halt at this *joli port de mer*, try to give you an idea of the state of affairs in Mexico at the present moment. All the principal towns and great cities are held by the French troops or by the forces of Maximilian, from the capital to Matamoras the tricolour being to the fore. There are, indeed, scattered bands lurking in the almost inaccessible mountain strongholds, but none of these, with the exception of the forces of Escobedo, can be considered formidable, and only annoy by occasionally descending from their hiding-places, and levying blackmail on any unfortunate train of merchandise they may happen to pounce upon. Still, the last serious affair between the Liberals and the French was a most unfortunate one for the latter.

When passing the Havana, we had heard rumours of the death of the Commandant de Briant, and at Mexico full particulars were given us regarding the combat of Santa Isabel, in which he lost his life.

Parras, one of the neatest and most civilized towns in the north, celebrated for its vineyards and the really excellent wine made there, is situated to the westward of Saltillo, at the distance of about forty leagues, and was at the time one of the outposts of the French. Now Parras has always been most devoted to the cause of Maximilian, and Máximo Campos, the prefect and military commander of the town, had frequently defended the place and saved it from the attacks of the Liberals, unassisted by the French troops. The district, on the contrary, called the Laguna, is hostile to Imperialism, and has invariably done its best to assist the Liberal party. Hence the Commandant de Briant, who, in command of some 150 men of the foreign legion, garrisoned the town, was naturally inclined to believe all reports exaggerated in favour of the enemy. To the north-west of Parras lies a desert of great extent—the Bolson de Mapimi—closed in on every side by mountains, and impassable except during the rainy season. To give you an idea of the difficulties and impracticability of this desert, let me tell you that some twelve months previously, the French, under Generals Brincourt and Jeaningros, forced the Mexicans, some

2000 strong, under Negrete, to take their choice of two evils—either to stand and fight, or to escape across the Mapimi. They chose the latter course, and attempted to cross it. Negrete did arrive on the opposite side and escaped the French bullets, but of his 2000 men, the bones of 1800 were left to whiten upon the sands; all his horses and mules perished, and his cannon and baggage remained there until he could send for them during the rains.

One day, news was brought into Parras that the enemy, under Escobedo, Treviño, and Naranco, had succeeded in crossing this same Mapimi, taking advantage of the close of the rainy season leaving some little water for their men and horses, and entered the Laguna by the pass of Santa Isabel, with the intention of pressing northwards towards the frontier, and cutting off the communication between Matamoras, then held by the Imperialists under Mejia, and the city of Monterey. The report stated that the enemy were numerous, over 2000 in number, cavalry and infantry. This the Commandant de Briant—taking it for granted that any exaggeration would be in favour of Escobedo—would not believe, and in answer to the counsels of Máximo Campos, who assured him that the information was trustworthy, attempted to prove to him the impossibility of so large a number of men being able to pass the desert. In the end he informed

Campos that, at all events, he intended to attack, and accordingly that evening, at nine o'clock, leaving fifty men, under Captain Bastidon, to garrison Parras, the little force sallied out, full of hope, and all eager to have a brush with the enemy.

Campos had with him about 150 Mexicans, most of them cavalry, and one gun—the Commandant de Briant some 120 or 130 of the Legion. At first all went well, and on arriving at the village of San Lorenzo, about two leagues from Santa Isabel, they fell in with the enemy's outposts and soon put them to flight. Here, it appears, Campos again remonstrated with De Briant, and assured him that from his information, which he could rely upon, he was positive that Escobedo and Treviño had, at the very least, 2000 men with them; but after his easy victory over the outlying pickets, the Commandant was not to be convinced, so, pushing onwards, the little force soon found itself stopped by one of those deep intricate barancas* so common throughout Mexico, and close upon the position of Santa Isabel. Now Santa Isabel consists of a large hacienda, built at the foot of a cerro, or solitary hill, standing alone in the vast plain, stretching far away to the mountains bordering the desert. The enemy occupied the hacienda and the cerro; upon the latter they

* The 'baranca' is a large ravine, and often extends for miles. It is the counterpart of the Indian 'nullah.'

had thrown up rough breastworks of loose stones, their cavalry being in the plain, concealed from view behind the hill.

The Commandant de Briant divided his force into three parties. The Mexican cavalry, under Campos, after clearing the baranca, were to ford a small stream beyond it, and pass to the opposite side of the hacienda, in order to intercept the fugitives, fifty men assaulting the hacienda itself, whilst the remainder of the Legion, under Briant, were to follow the windings of the nullah and attack the cerro, upon the side furthest from the hacienda. Unfortunately, the windings of this ravine resembled each other so exactly, that even in broad daylight it was very possible to make a mistake. One wrong turning brought the party, not to the foot of the cerro away from the hacienda, but between the hill and the loop-holed walls. It was too late to turn back, so the attack was bravely made, but the odds were too great, and the cross-fire from the buildings and the breastworks mowed the French down like grass. In the meanwhile Campos, after crossing the stream, found himself attacked by the Liberal cavalry, some 800 in number, and with difficulty escaped with a handful of his men to report his defeat to the Commandant. But the brave De Briant had given his last order, and his party had been almost killed to a man. Only

the fifty men remained who had been sent to the assault of the hacienda. They took the position, killing every Mexican within its walls—but it was too late. Briant was dead. Campos, seeing all was lost, had ridden off towards Parras, with not much chance of ever getting there, and the handful of men in the hacienda were the sole survivors on the French side.

They had but one chance for safety—to gain the baranca, and if possible, by following it, to get back to San Lorenzo. But fortune deserted them again, and one false turn took them into a complete *cul-de-sac*, where from behind the rocks they fired away their last cartridge before surrendering themselves up to the tender mercies of the patriots, who "rob and murder in the name of God and liberty."

One officer and about sixty men remained as prisoners in the hands of the victors, nearly all being wounded, and many of them very severely so. To the shame of the Liberals, if shame they have, all the Frenchmen too badly wounded to follow the rapid marches of their captors, were murdered; that is the right word to use, and I see no good in mincing matters over it. So closes the mournful scene. If there was undue temerity shown by the Commandant de Briant, he made ample atonement for it, falling fighting amongst the foremost of his men, and it is hardly meet to question the acts of those who die bravely in the forefront of the battle;

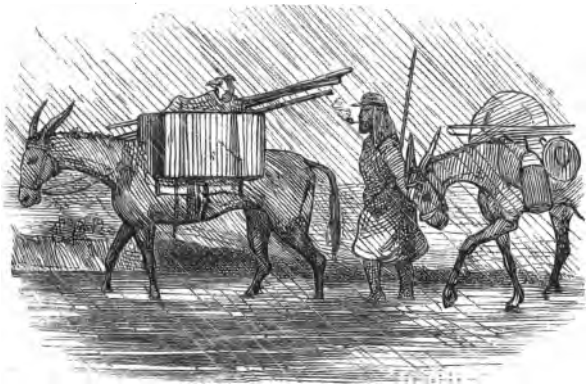
let us rather hope that should we ever be placed in like circumstances, we may do our duty as well.

Do not imagine for a moment that this success elated the Liberals into the display of anything approaching to bravery. Very far from it. Bastidon, who, you will recollect, was left to garrison Parras, could hardly believe the reports of the Mexican spies who came in from Santa Isabel. Still, acting with caution and prudence, he retired his little troop into the church, which had been loop-holed and fortified in case of an attack. There is a hill commanding this church, and the next day it was covered with the enemy, waving the arms and accoutrements of the vanquished, and summoning the little garrison to surrender, with derisive shouts and foul abuse. The Liberals subsequently sent two flags of truce, relating the fact that all Briant's force were either killed or prisoners, offering quarter to Bastidon, and assuring him, that unless he immediately laid down his arms, the whole force of Escobedo and Treviño would attack the church, and put every French soldier to the sword. But Bastidon was not to be cajoled by their fair promises. The second bearer of the flag of truce went back with the answer that "should a third be sent in the direction of the church, he would be fired on." And you will hardly believe that the Mexicans never had the courage to attack that handful of

brave men, but like the Levite in the parable, "passed by on the other side," and judged it prudent to leave them alone.

I do not think that this affair encouraged the Liberal party very much. You must remember they lost very heavily; all their men in the hacienda had been killed, and the success was virtually a barren one, as far as any ulterior advantage resulting to them from it.

Still, things were in this wise, no one knew exactly what the next move would be; the probable evacuation of Mexico by the French was in everybody's mouth, and reports were circulated that Austria would certainly refuse to lend more troops to Maximilian, her disputes with Prussia becoming every day more and more serious.



DURING THE RAIN.

UNDER THE PORTALS OF A HACIENDA.

CHAPTER VI.

NORTHWARD HO!

It was a thick, misty morning on the 21st, when we again started off with our horses' heads northwards, but the rain luckily did not come down until after we had all got under shelter at Soledad. We had equally good fortune on the next day, and were in our billets, in the charming little town of San Juan del Rio, just in time to escape the usual afternoon's storm. Really, we were marching away as rapidly as possible from the wet season, which appears to begin in the Valley of Mexico during

May, and then gradually works its way towards the north, and from here to Queretaro the downfalls of rain seldom commenced before three or four o'clock in the afternoon, by which time our day's march, for we started very early, usually at five in the morning, was finished.

De Colbert and I were certainly fortunate in St. Juan, for we were lodged with the most obliging people possible, and I verily believe the house would have been placed at our disposal, and the owner and his family have retired altogether had we demanded it; but all we asked for out of the way was permission to borrow some books from the drawing-room, which was neatly and well furnished, as indeed were all the apartments. I wish I could recollect the name of the work I took; it was some very ancient history of travels in Mexico, written towards the end of the last century by some enterprising Anglo-Saxon, and I declare I got so interested in the author's quaint old style, that I was half an hour behindhand in taking my tub, and consequently late for dinner, bringing down upon my head the anathemas of the *chef de popote*,—an individual by no means to be trifled with, as regarded his meals or his liquor. During dinner, of course we became reconciled; and later on in the evening, strolling down the broad, clean, principal street of the little town, under the avenue shadowing the

side-walks, I remember we came to a wise decision over our cigars, "that really, after all, Mexico was not so very bad a country, were it not for the perversity and obstinacy of the people who inhabit it."

But it was getting late, and we were to be up early the next morning. There was not sufficient time to discuss the why or the wherefore of this perversity too closely; so, attributing the ill-fortune and faults of the Mexican race to the possibility of their having been born under the influences of an evil star, we "turned in" and slept peacefully, as becomes men who have taken strong exercise and dined.

Before the sun was up, we were across the massive old stone bridge spanning the fast-running mountain-stream from which San Juan takes its name, and a long, dusty march brought us to a wretched hacienda in the last stage of decay, Colorado. There was not a room in the building where an Irishman would have put his pig, with the exception of the chapel, so there we were compelled to make our quarters, dine, and sleep,—all of us, French and Belgians, converting the sacristy into a dressing-room for ablutionary purposes.

You may imagine we were not sorry on the 25th when we mounted the last range of hills separating us from Queretaro, and arriving on the ridge were

rejoiced by the sight of the lovely valley beneath; for we had been travelling, since turning our backs on San Juan del Rio, over such ground as fortunately you only meet with in Mexico. It consists of a barren white soil, known by the name of *tepetate*, producing nothing but a ragged, dried-up description of moss, whilst here and there, through the numerous rents and fissures, crops up a stunted, misshapen yucca or the eternal maguey; for one can walk but a few yards without coming across one or other of these two plants anywhere in the land.

With the additions of a hot sun and dusty roads, such scenery, I can assure you, produces a most depressing effect, and it was a positive relief to our eyes to gaze down upon the fertile basin below us.

Shut in by mountains on every side, and with a temperature warmer than the Tierra Templada, though by no means so oppressively hot as that of the Tierra Caliente, the valley of Queretaro produces almost every fruit that grows in the country. The city itself, rejoicing, like Puebla, in many domes and steeples, is almost hidden from sight by the dense groves of trees that meet the view in every direction, a magnificent aqueduct connecting it with the hillside on the right—a work which must have originally cost an immense expenditure of time, money, and labour, but still leaves an impression upon you that it must be a piece of fairy architec-

ture, so lofty are the arches, so apparently light, and withal so eminently graceful.

Indeed, it was a scene to gladden us, wearied by those everlasting aloes and yuccas. I feel sure, in my own mind, that it will be a very long time before I shall ever be able to contemplate calmly either of these two last productions of the vegetable kingdom, or any species of cactus, without, at the least, suffering from a partial loss of temper.

Here were formerly the richest convents in Mexico, but, although one or two of them still exist, the greater number have either been closed or have lost the greater part of their property by confiscation; still, these and the churches are the finest buildings in the city, as is the case in nearly all Mexico. The plaza covers a large extent of ground, but, being entirely paved, has a heavy air, and the streets are laid down with those rough, slippery, impossible, round sort of paving-stones, that you find not unfrequently in many Continental towns, and are not likely to forget in a hurry, if you have ever been unfortunate enough to travel over them in a lumbering old diligence, as has been my fate several times. Here we found the 3rd Zouaves, commanded by Colonel Bochet, a connection of De Colbert's, and to whom I had also brought letters of introduction. He received us most hospitably, and, during the two days' halt we

made, I feel a conviction that we sat down to two of the best dinners, and spent two of the most agreeable evenings, I can recall in Mexico.

There are many pleasant rides to tempt you beyond the city; one especially, which we took, down the valley of the Cañada, was charming. Just beyond the suburbs, passing the country house and lovely gardens belonging to the Rubio family, —a little further on, a block of buildings, loop-holed, and flanked by towers, manifestly a fort, attracts attention. Yet this is only the *fabrique* of the Rubios, where the finest zarapes and rebozos are woven; but in Mexico the Chinacos—the worst outsiders of the Liberal party—are apt to pounce upon any manufactory of this description, levy a blackmail in the name of Liberty,—poor Liberty! her name is taken in vain here almost as much as in the Old World!—and depart as quickly as possible, possibly leaving two or three poor devils, who may have offended them by word or deed, hanging on the trees, *pour encourager les autres.*

So you see the proprietors of similar establishments are compelled to become, to a certain extent, soldiers; and it will not astonish you to learn that the Rubios have the permission of the Government to keep up a certain force of men for the protection of their property, and that sentries mount nightly upon their walls.

Passing the *fabrique*, and the small town of neatly-built and well-kept houses occupied by the Indian factory hands, and which do infinite credit to the Rubios, we follow a long, narrow valley, overgrown with fruit trees, and traversed by a clear running stream, looking very much as if it ought to hold trout,—but unfortunately it does not,—and eventually come to a halt at the baths of the Cañada. These baths are hewn out of the solid rock, and are about twelve feet square by five feet deep. There are about half-a-dozen of them, and the water, which comes from a spring close by, is naturally tepid, just warm enough to be refreshing for a dip after our ride out. Ten minutes' splashing about, a quarter of an hour to dress, and we do the couple of leagues back to Queretaro, at a sharp canter, where we arrive decidedly refreshed, and with such good appetites that we certainly shall hurry our dressing for dinner, when we hear that the *potage* is on the table.

On the morning of the 27th, the convoy—heavier and more cumbersome than ever, for it got an additional lot of carts and a few more *isolés** by halting at Queretaro—started for Montenegro, De Colbert and I remaining behind to breakfast with an old friend of his, Couturier, the Capitaine-Adju-

* 'Isolés' is the French military term for soldiers detached from their corps.

dant-Major of the Zouaves. In the afternoon we rode out to join our convoy, and did not reach Montenegro until dark,—the road being very steep and rough, for more than half the distance encumbered with large rolling stones, the remains of an old Spanish causeway that apparently never has been and never will be repaired, and hence it was almost impossible for us to move out of a walk or an occasional trot. The next day's march lay through a fine, well-cultivated valley, and on our left we passed a very large lake, covered with waterfowl, and the most tempting place possible to launch a punt in. I was astonished at this season to see as many duck as I did, but, passing again in November, there were literally myriads. In fact, nearly every piece of water during the winter is black with geese and widgeon, teal, duck, and divers, and grebe of different sorts. Either on the great lakes in the valley of Mexico, or on any of the large pieces of water which are common throughout the country, a punt might be worked with the greatest ease. There are, however, two drawbacks, for, in the first place, wildfowl on the lakes of the valley are private property, and it might be difficult to obtain a permit,—this, I fancy, though, might be overcome by feeing the men who farm the lakes; and, in the second place, the roads, and the uncertainty of getting any means of transport, would

be almost an insurmountable hindrance to changing one's ground from time to time, and duck and widgeon are pretty much the same all the world over: they soon find out when a heavy punt gun is in their neighbourhood.

La Noria, our point on the 20th, is one of the most flourishing haciendas we have yet come across. The haciendado was communicative, and spoke French very fairly. In the afternoon he took us through all the buildings and granaries, giving us at the same time ample information as to the management of these colossal farms. The principal homestead—the hacienda—is built all over the country pretty much upon the same plan. It is a large quadrangular stone building, frequently loop-holed and fortified, with all the windows upon the outside strongly barred; you enter by a large arched gateway, and under the portal, to the right, generally find the "tienda y fonda," appertaining to the owner, where the Indians on the property are obliged to purchase everything of which they stand in need; in fact, they are encouraged to run up long scores, or squander their hardly-earned wages in drink, in order that the little money they have got may again find its way back into the pockets of their masters. To the left is the sanctum of the haciendado, where he transacts all business, and

* Tienda y fonda,—grocery, wine store, eating-house.

issues orders to his subordinates, seldom interfering himself with any out-of-door arrangements, quitting his easy chair, or extinguishing the eternal papelito, except to take his meals. Beyond the portal you enter into a large courtyard, comprising all the superior accommodation of the hacienda; in the centre is probably a fountain shaded by trees, and under the verandahs you generally find flowers in profusion, and dozens of cages containing the bright-plumaged birds that don't sing, and the more homely-looking mocking-bird, who keeps everything on the *qui vive*, imitating even the cats or the French clairons. Passing through this courtyard you enter another, and here is stabling for all the more valuable stock, the stallions, riding-horses, driving-mules, etc. etc., for it would be dangerous to leave them outside to the tender mercies of MM. les Chinacos. Adjoining this, and forming part of the same block, is always a chapel. Around the hacienda, but at a respectful distance,—lest they should be captured, and serve as a shelter to any enemy,—lie the large farm-buildings, granaries, threshing-floors, store houses, and large corrals, or enclosures, for cattle and horses.

This is the main farm, and is generally situated as nearly as possible in the centre of the tracts belonging to the hacienda, which has probably ten, fifteen, or even more, square leagues of land apper-

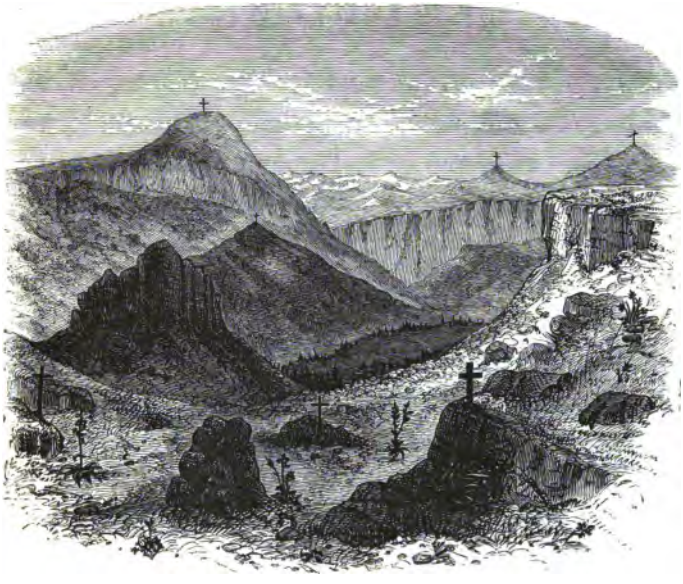
taining to it. There are the vast runs of pasture land, where herds of horses and cattle roam about half-wild; these are under the care of the vaqueros, who are responsible for their not straying, and are charged with their branding, lassoing, etc. The whole extent of the property is divided into ranchos, or small farms, under the direction of rancheros, who either receive a salary from the head proprietor, or a percentage on the earnings of the rancho. The field work is done by the peones, who, although not exactly slaves, are very nearly so in everything but the name. They are born, live, work, and die on the estate, never being their own masters, for they are invariably indebted to the tienda, and obliged continually to be working out their debt, which they do not often succeed in doing. The home work is done by the mozos, who perhaps have a trifle the best of it; the servants of the hacienda itself, who wait on the family or the haciendado, being termed the criados. To sum up, the whole business reminds one forcibly of the system of caste among the servants in India.

As long as the proprietor of the hacienda manages his property himself, all goes pretty fairly, but this is seldom the case; he generally lives either in Mexico or one of the large cities, and spends every peso he can get hold of,—leaving his affairs to a majordomo, who, of course, makes his own

purse and fills his own pockets by every means at his disposal.

Then there is wailing and lamentation amongst the rancheros, the peones, and the mozos, for the hour is come when they, perforce, go to the wall!

VAQUEROS.



PASS OF SANTA MARIA DEL RIO.

CHAPTER VII.

TO ST. LUIS POTOSI AND VENADO.

THE march of the 30th brought us to the small town of St. Luis de la Paz, garrisoned by Zouaves; and here we were again compelled to halt, the bad roads and overladen carts telling heavily on the mules.

Looking back to my diary, I find the entry for these two days is as follows:—"St. Luis de la Paz. Beastly hole; bad quarters; bad food." It is never worth while to dwell long over disagreeable recollections; so, if you please, we will pass on to the hacienda of La Sousada, where we were well lodged on the 1st of June, and heard some news.

To the east of our road lay Rio Verde, on the borders of the State of Tamaulipas. This State was full of Liberals, and in fact communication between the capital (the port of Tampico, held by the Imperialists) and the interior had long been impossible, except by steamer to Vera Cruz and so round by Mexico. Such a state of affairs had paralysed all trade at the city of St. Luis Potosi, as formerly most of the goods from Europe for the interior of the country were shipped for Tampico, and sent up by conductas* to the large houses of St. Luis. But an unfortunate affair had happened some months previously. A very large and valuable convoy of goods had been captured and either robbed or burnt by the Chinacos at a place called Tancasnequi, and so heavily did this loss tell on the merchants of St. Luis that since then they seemed to have given up all idea of receiving anything by the way of Tampico until the country should be in a more settled state. In short, nothing could be more ruinous to their money-making prospects than the fact of the French holding St. Luis and the Liberals infesting Tamaulipas; and I should think that at the present moment they must be infinitely better off than they were six months ago, for then all business was brought entirely to a standstill.

* Conductas,—the term applied to large convoys of merchandise travelling on the roads. They are usually guarded.

The news the haciendado gave out was rather startling; he asserted that Escobedo had succeeded in passing the French lines in the north, and was now actually in Tamaulipas, awaiting a band of Chinacos from Rio Verde who were on their way to meet him in the vicinity of Santa Maria del Rio. We could not credit his first piece of information, but the second, regarding the enemy being on the move between Rio Verde and Santa Maria, was possibly true; and so it turned out to be, for when we halted by the roadside to breakfast the next morning, Dupeyron received a dispatch from the commanding officer at St. Luis Potosi—Colonel D'Ornano—warning us against a probable attack, and informing us that we should be reinforced on our arrival at Santa Maria by a detachment of cavalry and some infantry.

The same day at our halt, La Villela, we met a large convoy of sick and time-expired soldiers on their road down to Mexico, and sat up late that night; for over many bottles, and innumerable cigars and pipes, all the recent affairs in the north were fought over again, and praises were many and loud in favour of De la Hayrie, whom we shall meet later on in the day. I am pretty sure that a good many heads were disturbed the following morning by that fatal "bee in the bonnet," that disagreeable follower of a night where "drink has been plenty," but fortu-

nately for the sufferers our march was short. After passing through an ugly-looking ravine, where ominous heaps of rocks, surmounted by rough crosses, suggested unpleasant ideas of the locality, a sudden turn brought us upon a well-built, clean-looking little town, nearly hidden from view by tall trees, and built in the centre of a small valley hemmed in on every side by range upon range of lofty hills, the summit of each peak being surmounted by a prominent wooden cross,—I trust for some wise and religious purpose. This was Santa Maria del Rio.

We were soon lodged in a pleasant, cheery house, looking out upon the crowded plaza filled with Indians selling fruit and flowers, for there is no doubt that the Aztec race, however much their ideas may have been degraded of late years, still retain that exquisite taste and fondness for flowers alluded to by Cortés. Strolling about on the market-place, during the time our breakfast was being prepared, our camp-beds "fixed," and our traps unpacked, we heard the clairons of the detachment that, if you remember, Colonel d'Ornano had sent to inform us would arrive here. It proved to be under the command of Captain Charrier, of the Foreign Legion, the officer who had lately superintended the laying-down of the telegraph-line between Queretaro and St. Luis,—now I should fancy gone to rack and ruin, and not likely to be recon-

structed by the Mexicans, even should they eventually have quiet times in their disturbed land.

Charrier brought us news. It proved to be untrue that Escobedo had eluded the vigilance of the French in the north, but there was no doubt that the people from Rio Verde had made a move and were in our neighbourhood. Still it was not likely that we should be molested by them, for a strong detachment had been sent to Las Pilas, halfway between Santa Maria and St. Luis, to support us in case of need, whilst this force remained to guard our rear.

Accordingly the following day we pushed on to Las Pilas and on the 5th marched into St. Luis Potosi, without having seen a sign of an enemy. But Charrier was more fortunate than we were, for on the 6th he caught this band and attacked them, killing some thirty or forty of their number and pursuing them far into the hills,—putting an end to the annoyance they had caused by keeping troops continually on the move, etc. etc., for such a severe lesson they would not be likely to forget in a hurry, even should it not have the effect of entirely breaking up the party.

St. Luis Potosi has none of the advantages of position enjoyed by Queretaro, Mexico, or Puebla. From the large village of Los Posos, you see the city in the distance, covering a large extent of ground, and fancy yourself within about a mile of

the garita; but the long, straight road, ankle-deep in dust, is very deceptive, and there are, at the least, a couple of hot weary leagues to drag through, before arriving even in the suburbs.

Neither is there anything particularly striking in the approach, for you are in the centre of a vast and highly cultivated plain, shut in by the mountain ranges, the most conspicuous peak of which is the Sierra Madre. Still, away on the right, that dark-looking hill contains the once world-famed silver mine of Potosi, now fallen in and neglected. A couple of men scratch away at the ground, in order to keep up the claim of the present owners on the property, for all mines in which no work is carried on for forty-eight hours consecutively become, by forfeiture, the property of the Government.

Perhaps some day they may strike upon a new vein, and dig out a more colossal fortune than has ever yet been produced from the earth.

It is not impossible. A friend of mine, not very long ago, bought a "bar" in an unproductive mine for £400; a few days after the purchase was effected, the mine began to yield; within a month a good vein was struck, and he now receives £200 a month as his share of the profits, and the vendor has offered him besides £10,000 to repurchase the "bar." Fortunate speculator! may your "bar" pro-

duce and prosper! I will not wish you good luck, it would be absurd, for have you not got the *veine?*

Those two lofty minarets on the left, appearing to rise from the tall trees beneath them, almost make visions of Delhi and the Jumma Musjid rise and float before your eyes. They belong to the old convent of Guadalupe, now fortified and garrisoned by the French; for the old days, when the monks of St. Luis had their fresh fish sent up from Tampico—through the entire breadth of the State of Tamaulipas—by relays of Indian runners, have long since passed away, nor is it probable they will ever return again to gladden the hearts of the Church party. It is true, at the present time, a few cowls were to be seen moodily and dreamily flitting about at the corners of streets, but when the Liberals are once more in power, they must take refuge where they best may, or submit to the exactions and insults of that unscrupulous mob.

St. Luis Potosi is clean, and that advantage it most certainly enjoys over even Mexico itself, for many of the smaller streets about the suburbs of the capital are very abominations. The plaza boasts of a palace and a cathedral, the latter recently rebuilt and in good taste. In the exterior work of many of the old religious and conventual buildings there are, besides, some really fine pieces of architecture and stone-carving worthy of notice.

Nor in the city is there any lack of good shops, or a want of society, for every evening, when the band of the Foreign Legion plays on the plaza, it is so crowded with listeners, nearly all of them belonging to a good class of society, that it is with some difficulty you succeed in strolling round to smoke a quiet cigar. Taking it altogether, for there is a very pretty Alameda besides, St. Luis is by no means a disagreeable spot to pass even a month in, which I was fated to do later on in the year, although my first visit only lasted for three days.

I do not know the precise reason why on that third morning everything went wrong with us, but there are some days upon which nothing will go right; this evidently was one of them, and by no means to be marked with a white stone.

To begin with, we overslept ourselves, and, of course, our servants profited by our example to do likewise. Then a mule—a brute at the best of times—took it into his head to break his bridle, knock over the man who was holding him, and gallop down the street, sending his load and the bât saddle flying in every direction. This was very serious; the girths, chains, and straps were all broken, and the heavy waggons had started half an hour before, to cross the river, so there was nothing to be done for it, but to hire a mule carriage to carry out the *débris*. This misfortune was soon

forgotten, for catching the column at their first halt, we transferred our luggage into one of the hindmost carts, and after five leagues of very dusty, hot marching, arrived at our resting-place for the night—Garrabatilas.

Now of all disagreeable halting-places between Vera Cruz and Monterey, recommend me to this frightful Garrabatilas. There are two or three very dirty Indian huts, a pool of bad, muddy water, a waste of sand, and a few scanty trees. To lodge in the huts was out of the question, they were inhabited by legions of fleas—an insect apparently much to the fancy of all the Aztec race.

There was only one course to follow—to encamp. Beyond a doubt the Fates were still dead against us, for, to our dismay, De Colbert's tent was nowhere to be found, and evidently it had been stolen since leaving Mexico. Making the best of a bad business we put up our beds under the thickest tree we could find, and consoling ourselves, said that at any rate we were pretty sure to be safe from rain. We spoke rashly, for soon after dinner and just about nightfall, down came a thunderstorm from the mountains, and it poured nearly the whole of the night.

In these cases, I do not think that either the actual discomfort or the drenching is the most disagreeable part of the annoyance. It is that terri-

ble battle in the morning, with damp clothes and saturated boots, that is productive of strong language and bad temper, and has the most lasting effect upon one's mind.

The next day, though, good quarters in the hacienda of Las Boccas—a finer one even than that of the Noria—soon made us forget our annoyances at Garrabatilas, and passing through the small town of Moctezuma (or Hedionda) the day after, on the 11th we arrived at Venado, meeting in the town the Contre-Guerillas, under Colonel Du Pin.

Here we halted again for a day to rest the mules and make bread for the men; and a very pleasant spot it was for a sojourn, that quiet little town, with the clear, brawling mountain torrent rushing through it, and the large shady trees overshadowing the pleasant paths following its stream.

ROAD CROSS.

THE CONTRE-GUERILLAS.

CHAPTER VIII.

IRREGULARS.

THE corps of Contre-Guerillas was originally raised at Vera Cruz, by orders of Marshal Forey, under the command of a man called Stekelin, and were originally composed of Mexicans and foreigners, who took service to serve in the Tierra Caliente. From Vera Cruz they were sent to Medellin, a town some short distance off, and their mission was to suppress and hunt down the brigands and robbers, who had become a perfect pest to everybody in those fever-stricken districts, where it was judged imprudent to garrison French troops.

The command was eventually given to Colonel Du Pin, an officer belonging to the Corps d'Etat-Major, who was in China in 1860, upon the staff of General Montauban, and, under his orders, their construction was considerably altered. A great number of volunteers from the French army were enrolled, besides Arabs, and even Americans; their strength was increased, and they were formed into a corps, consisting of two squadrons of cavalry and four companies of infantry, with two light guns, *pièces de montagne.*

From this period their service became general, and was not, as before, confined exclusively to the Tierra Caliente, for, amongst numerous other expeditions, they marched through the entire State of Tamaulipas, in a parallel line with the great main-road leading to the north, and were engaged on several occasions with the enemy; one affair, that at St. Antonio, being a very serious business.

The corps is admirably organized for rapid marching, having no carriage but bât-mules. To a certain extent, indeed, they have been raised on the same system as our irregular troops in India, the trooper receiving a fixed rate of pay, and being obliged to feed both himself and his horse upon it. With the exception, too, of the turban—the Contre-Guerilla wears the large grey felt Mexican sombrero—their dress is not dissimilar. It consists, for the cavalry-

man, of a short red or blue patrol-jacket—the squadrons being distinguished by the difference of colour,— a large cummerbund, very loose easy breeches, of the colour known in India as the khakirung, brown leather butcher boots and heavy spurs, each man being armed with sword and revolver; the infantry soldier, putting gaiters and ankle-boots in the place of the butchers, and giving him a rifle as his arm, wearing about the same costume.

The greater proportion of the four companies are mounted on mules,—consequently, being almost entirely unencumbered with baggage, they can make extraordinary marches, and extraordinary marches they have made, I can assure you. I remember one of the officers, Ezpeleta, bringing dispatches from Marshal Bazaine to General Douay at Saltillo, marching with his troop for six successive days at an average of sixteen leagues per day; and you must recollect that in this country the roads are bad beyond description, yet this was looked on as a mere everyday performance.

The Mexicans themselves make the most wonderful marches, and being perfectly contented as long as they can get tortillas,* the French soon discovered the impossibility of catching their straggling bands, who, besides, had the great advantage of knowing

* Tortilla,—'damper' of Indian corn, the 'chupaty.'

the country perfectly. In consequence of this, mounted companies were formed in every battalion, as well as the Compagnies Franches, consisting of picked officers and men, under the same conditions of pay, etc., as the Contre-Guerillas. These troops did excellent service; indeed, without them it would have been sheer waste of time pursuing guerillas and Chinacos, who, as it was, when once in the mountains, were almost sure to escape, dispersing and meeting again, days after, in another part of the country.

On the 13th, we took our leave of the Contre-Guerillas, who entertained us all most hospitably at their mess, and marched seven leagues to the town of Charcas, celebrated for the rich silver mines in its vicinity. They were worked by the Aztecs as far back as before the arrival of Cortés, and still continue to yield plentifully. The town is curiously situated in a hollow basin, so that you drop suddenly upon it, and from traversing a desert plain find yourself transported into an oasis, where the houses are buried from view by wide-spreading trees. It is by no means large, and the number of inhabitants is small, even with regard to its size; still Charcas enjoys the enviable reputation of being one of the cleanest, neatest, and quietest towns on the great northern high-road. The small plaza is perfect, with its really handsome fountain and large basin of

clear, pure water; in fact there is an air of finish about everything not often met with in Mexico.

De Colbert and I were billeted upon one of the part-proprietors of the principal mine. At first he did not seem to relish our presence in the least; but as soon as he saw that we were peaceably-inclined individuals, and treated him as a gentleman, he suddenly changed round, lending us one of his servants as a guide, and writing us a letter to the manager of his mine. Accordingly, soon after breakfast, we started off—Du Four, a captain of the Belgian corps, accompanying us,—and after half an hour's pretty fast riding, reached a dark black-looking ridge of small hills, at the foot of which several buildings and sheds, as well as various heaps of ore, ready to have the silver crushed out of them, showed us that we had reached the shaft of the mine. The manager, a Frenchman, who had been mining in Mexico for the last thirty years—so he informed us,—was exceedingly obliging, and after showing us over the workshops and the extensive machinery used for pumping the water out of the mine, conducted us to the workmen's shaft, where we found everything prepared for our descent into the bowels of the earth. Next Sunday, should you go to the "Zoo" in Regent's Park, look at the pole in the den of the brown bears, and then you will be able to form a capital idea of the only means of

descent available in the mines of Charcas. Every 40 or 50 feet a ledge of rock is left projecting out from the sides of the shaft, upon this rests the end of the bear-pole; after taking breath, you descend another and a similar pole, and then another and another, and so on, apparently *ad infinitum*. You may imagine it was tiring work, and I really should be afraid to guess the number of poles we descended, for the shaft is an immense depth, and they appeared to me to be legion. On reaching the bottom of the mine, there is barely room to stand upright, but a perfect labyrinth of galleries branch off in every direction, and at the extremity of all we followed up there were a couple of Indians squatted down, with their backs against the rock, busily engaged in striking off large chips of the ore. These workmen are paid in proportion to the weight they send up the shaft by four P.M., and all we saw were evidently working against time, and very industriously. They are by no means badly treated, earning a good deal of money, and being lodged by their masters.

After spending about an hour in the galleries, the hardest part of our day's journey commenced, the ascent of the bear-poles; and I can assure you, on reaching the surface of the earth again, we were uncommonly shaky about the knees and back, and bathed in perspiration. As to our Belgian friend, he

was done to a turn, and I truly believe that had there been a couple more poles he would have given up the task in despair, and remained upon one of the ledges.

A glass of absinthe and water soon put us to right, and laden with specimens of the ore, we took leave of the mines and cantered back to Charcas, arriving just in time to dress for dinner.

In the evening our host brought all his family in to take tea with us, and have a chat. His father-in-law was a Frenchman, and he himself spoke French fairly enough; so we got on capitally, and I never saw any one more delighted than the old man was when he discovered that he was actually talking to the direct descendant of *le grand* Colbert.

I think we could have passed a day or two longer very agreeably at Charcas, but it was not to be; the following morning there were seven long leagues to get through to the hacienda of Laguna Secca, and the day after, a long dusty march to the dirty town of Guadalupe. Just as we were sitting down to dinner at this last place the alcalde bustled in to warn us that he had just received information from Santa Catarina, about five leagues off, of an assemblage of bands, and that their intention was to attack us during the night. Dupeyron was obliged to set to work to take the necessary precautions, collecting the carts on the plaza, placing extra piquets and double sentries on all the approaches to

the town, etc. etc. Still, beyond keeping everybody on the *qui vive* during the night, and obliging us to pack our traps and sleep with our clothes and boots on, there was no harm done, for we saw nothing of any enemy; and after halting the next day at the hacienda of La Presa—in a lamentable state of ruin, for it has been visited several times by the Chinacos—the morning after, we arrived in Matehuala.

This was on the 17th of June, and we did not expect to remain more than a couple of days, at the outside, before leaving again for Saltillo. But the aspect of affairs had changed considerably of late. The bands of guerillas had sprung up again, and several were even close to Matehuala itself; consequently it was not thought prudent to allow our convoy to proceed without being reinforced, and the garrison being too weak to spare us any men, we were brought to a standstill for an indefinite period.

Matehuala is by no means one of the most agreeable places in the New World. Every afternoon, about half-past four, there rises a wind, driving the fine white dust into every crevice and corner of your house, shut the windows and doors as firmly as you may. Perhaps the mornings compensate to some extent for these dust storms. Then the plain, covered far and wide with standing crops, may rival in fertility with any of the corn lands of the Old World; and the outlines of the mountain chains

enclosing the valley stand out clearly against the cloudless blue sky,—the most prominent object of the landscape being the tall volcanic peak, El Fradre, rich in copper and silver mines, lying between the town and the mining district of Catorce. Still, everything was done that could be by the garrison to keep off the *ennui* of the place. There was a very fair race-meeting, a capital steeple-chase, and a ball given to the Mexican ladies (a great success), during our long halt; so one always had something to look forward to and talk about.

But there were more serious events than either balls or races passing during our sojourn here, and soon the long-expected storm was fated to break very suddenly, and with but little warning. In the meanwhile we heard of bands and rumours of bands, and still waited impatiently for the order to march on to Saltillo.

VENADO.

PASS BETWEEN TANQUE DE LA VACCA AND AGUA NUEVA.

CHAPTER IX.

COMING EVENTS CAST THEIR SHADOWS BEFORE.

We had brought up with our convoy a *clairon*, belonging to the Bataillon d'Afrique, who had been detached with the Contre-Guerillas, and was on his way to join his corps at Saltillo. He was one of those wild, half-Arab-looking soldiers you only meet in Algerian regiments, and excessively amusing. For hours along the road he entertained us one morning by relating his adventures and marches under Colonel Du Pin, and though not exactly a clean or by any means a smart-looking soldier, he

had gradually become rather a favourite with some of us. You may imagine how astonished we were one afternoon—on the 21st I think it was—to learn that St. Pierre had deserted the day previously, but had been caught and brought in by some Mexicans, whilst endeavouring to make his way to join the Liberals at Tula. There had been a great deal of desertion latterly among the Germans and foreigners of the Legion, and very few of them had been caught. Besides, it was reported that Escobedo had collected all the deserters he could get hold of, and formed them into a corps, thinking, and justly so, that as each man fought with a rope round his neck, the probabilities were that as a body they would serve his purpose well, being bound to stand to the last.

On the same day, curiously enough, the clue to the desertions was unravelled, and two Mexicans were arrested—keepers of a small fonda, much frequented by the soldiers—who, it was plainly proved, had been long playing the extremely dangerous game of inducing men to desert, giving them a large bounty and guides to conduct them over to the enemy; they receiving so much per head for each man gained to the Liberals by their diplomacy.

It was then evidently necessary to punish all offenders, and deter others from following their example; and accordingly, at four o'clock the same

afternoon—for the French do not lose any time over these matters—a parade was held near the cemetery, St. Pierre was shot, and the two *embaucheurs* hanged.

The *clairon* met his death without the slightest bravado, and still with wonderful firmness. One could not help feeling sorry for his fate, although he certainly deserved it, and acknowledged the justice of his sentence himself. The only excuse he gave was very French. He said that he was thoroughly tired of his life, and wanted more excitement; besides, every one knew that he was an unlucky man!

As to the two Mexicans, they exhibited the same disregard for death as, during the mutiny in India, the Sepoys invariably evinced,—one of them smoking his papelito until the last moment, and paying very little attention to the prayers of the priest who accompanied them,—he, poor man, appearing by far the most terrified of the party.

On the 26th and 27th, there were rumours of Liberal bands being on their way to levy a contribution on the rich silver mines of Catorce, and a small expedition was sent out at midnight on the 28th to surprise them if possible.

After marching all night, the French arrived at Catorce about midday, and were in time to capture all the enemy's mules laden with plunder, and pre-

vent the exaction of the fine imposed upon the town. Still they were too late to do them any very material damage, for they only surprised one of their outlying pickets, killing a few men and taking a Liberal officer prisoner. The force returned on the 30th, and then the enemy were reported at Cedral, only five leagues from the town, and on the direct road to Saltillo.

In short, little by little, the plot commenced to thicken, and Chinacos and guerillas cropped up in every direction, why or wherefore one could hardly surmise; but still, every day brought the news of the reappearance and resuscitation of some band or other, that everybody thought had been wiped out long ago.

On the 1st of July the Contre-Guerillas marched in, and on the 3rd left during the night on an expedition in the direction of San Cristoval. On that same day, the mounted "troop of Matehuala," composed of Mexicans and a few Frenchmen, under the command of Van der Duyn, an officer of the Foreign Legion, had a successful affair with a small band in the very valley of Matehuala itself; and on the 6th we heard that reinforcements for the north had started from Mexico.

On the 9th we heard the first decisive news from the north, and learnt that the Austrian troops had been defeated by Escobedo, between Monterey and

Matamoros, and that subsequently Mejia—the best supporter, and one of the most honest generals of the Imperial cause—had been forced to surrender the latter important seaport town to the Liberals. A few days later, intelligence arrived that Tampico had been captured, and about the same time 500 men of the Legion, under Colonel Guillem, reinforced Matehuala—a force of cavalry and infantry descending at the same time from Saltillo to Vanegas to escort our convoy.

On the 12th we got under weigh, marching ten leagues to Vanegas, and here we met a squadron of De Colbert's regiment, the 12th Chasseurs, and joined their mess,—a capital good one it was too, for we "pulled well together," and always continued the best of friends.

We had frightful weather all along the road from Matehuala to Saltillo, for during our halt the wet season had been gradually creeping northwards, and now we got in for the very thick of it. The latter part of our first march of nine leagues to Las Animas was positively knee-deep in mud and water—not the least sign of a road to be seen; for all we knew, we might have been crossing a broad, shallow lake for the last two or three miles before arriving in camp. Here we were obliged to halt for half a day, sending back a troop to fetch some men who had been left at Vanegas by mistake. On

their arrival, we started about midday, and with the rain pouring in torrents all the way, reached the large hacienda of Salado, belonging to one Bustamente, a known scoundrel, and "Gefe de Bande," who had long ago left his farming, and now was in the mountains somewhere near the Valle de Potosi, with a good number of Chinacos at his back, and only waiting patiently for an opportunity to descend and plunder upon the high-road.

Salado was held by the French with a force of four companies, and admirably fortified to resist an attack. I do not think the Liberals, however strong, would ever have succeeded in taking it from them, —not that there was much chance of their trying to do so. Their policy was never to engage in a doubtful affair if it could possibly be avoided, and to keep up a constant system of intercepting couriers, occasionally annoying the weaker posts of the Imperialists, whenever they happened to be somewhat isolated from immediate support.

The rain was so heavy, and the roads so deep in mud, that the Commandant Koch, who was in command of our column and convoy, was compelled to order a halt for the next day, sending on couriers to inform General Douay of his intention. These couriers were very well paid by the French, the dispatches being generally rolled up in the form of cigarettes, and placed in the centre of the bundle of

"papelitos" every Mexican invariably carries; but, even with these precautions, they were frequently caught by the Liberals, and when captured either hanged or branded with the letters T. A. M., "Traidores á Méjico," so that their identity might be established beyond a doubt, should they be taken prisoners a second time.

Late in the evening a spy came in from Encarnacion, another post fifteen leagues further up the Saltillo road, and reported that the garrison had been attacked that day by a force of some 600 of the enemy. A few minutes later, two of the men of the hacienda were discovered inducing soldiers of the garrison to desert, and brought in as prisoners. They had actually gone so far as to conduct a couple of privates belonging to the Legion some distance from the hacienda away into the brushwood, where there were horses waiting to convey the party over to the Liberal lines. The soldiers, however, turned round on their guides, and marched them with their horses back to Salado. Of course, under the circumstances, they had short shrift, and knee-deep in water, stumbling and groping along by the light of a lantern, the two Mexicans were led across the open space in front of the hacienda, and hanged upon the trees near the large well. I do not think I shall forget for a long time to come the loud shrieks and lamentations of

their wretched wives, who watched by the Noria far away into the night, mingling prayers for their husbands' souls with a grief refusing to be comforted. Yet so it has been, and always will be, as long as war lasts. The greatest blows must unavoidably fall upon those who are not even actors in the scene, the wives and mothers of those that fall.

The march of the next day to San Salvador, five leagues, we actually accomplished without any rain, and on entering the village met two mule carriages, containing a Mexican family, on their journey down from Saltillo. It turned out that they had been taken prisoners by Pedro Martinez, on his return from the unsuccessful attack he made on Encarnacion, and held to ransom. After being taken miles out of their road, in the direction of Valle Potosi, they had been eventually released, giving a bond for 4000 piastres, about £800, in order to propitiate the band. These bonds are always scrupulously redeemed, because, in case of recapture at a later period, a very probable occurrence, no mercy would ever be shown towards the man who had failed in his agreement with a "Gefe de Bande." On the whole, the family did not appear very much annoyed by this incident in their journey. They seemed to take the affair pretty much as a matter of course, and two of the daughters, one of whom,

the youngest, was very good-looking, were I fancy rather pleased than annoyed at their adventure, and thought it excessively romantic.

Our next march, on the 17th, was a long one of ten leagues to Encarnacion, where traces were still to be seen of the enemy's attack. There are only two stone buildings of any size—the hacienda, held by the French, and the Hotel de las Diligencias, in which the enemy established themselves, being from this position able to annoy the garrison considerably. The Liberals seem, according to most accounts, to have attacked rather upon the hope that the men of the Legion would prove false to their colours, than upon any reasonable prospects of success. They had, it appears, already tampered with some of the men, and their plan consisted in pushing forward a few deserters who were with them to endeavour to induce their former comrades to join their side; but they were entirely out of their reckoning, and, after losing several of their best men, were obliged to retire the following morning, having inflicted little or no damage upon the garrison.

On the 18th, passing Tanqué de la Vacca, a long march of twelve leagues brought us late in the afternoon to Agua Nueva, a tumble-down village, where the only place to lodge the squadron was in the church, and there it was almost impossible to sleep for that universal plague of Mexican villages—fleas.

Happily our journey with the lumbering, slow-going old convoy was almost over, for the next day only seven leagues and a half remained to Saltillo. Breaking the road by halting to breakfast at Buenavista, about two in the afternoon our voyaging for a short time was brought to a close.

RANCHERO.

PASS INTO THE VALLEY OF RINCONADA.

CHAPTER X.

THE BEGINNING OF THE END.

SALTILLO, differing in no respect from the general run of Mexican towns, was a dull quarter, and after calling on General Douay and his staff, who received me with the greatest kindness and civility, I was by no means sorry to hear that before long there would be a move in the direction of Monterey, for I was already tired of inaction, and quite ready to be once again on the road.

You will recollect we received intelligence of the loss of Matamoros before leaving Matehuala. I will now try to give you some idea of the succes-

sion of events by which the surrender was hastened on, and subsequently the evacuation of the north decided upon, for General Douay's departure from Saltillo proved to be merely a movement supporting the retreat of the French troops under General Jeaningros from Monterey.

Some time previously, Escobedo, who then commanded the only important force of the Liberals in the north, was in the vicinity of Galeana. Now, if you will take the trouble to look at the plan, you will readily perceive that columns marching from Saltillo, Victoria, Monterey, and Salado would drive Escobedo from Galeana, either forcing him into the Tierra Caliente, or compelling him to fight,—provided, of course, that he was in ignorance of the plans, as in that case, gaining Linares, he would be able to escape the combination by taking the northern road in the direction of Matamoros.

Under instructions from Mexico, four columns marched from the above-mentioned points, under the orders of General Douay, and beyond a doubt the expedition would have succeeded in its object, had not Escobedo received some inkling of the intended movements—either by capturing some couriers from the capital, or through information from the many Liberal spies,—and moving rapidly to Linares, taken the route towards Matamoros simultaneously with the departure of the French from Saltillo.

Latterly the communications between Matamoros and Monterey had been so extremely unsafe, that all commerce was brought to a standstill.

Despairing of the position of affairs, and wishing to put an end to the state of uncertainty in which they were placed, the merchants offered a large subsidy to the Government for the payment of their troops, on condition that an attempt should be made to pass a large convoy of merchandise between the two cities. Always hard up, the Government caught at the chance, and sent orders from Mexico to Mejia, then commanding at Matamoros, to start off a convoy under strong escort, without any delay for any cause whatsoever.

On receiving these instructions, Mejia had no other course left open to him but to obey them to the letter; accordingly, warning the merchants in the town to collect their goods immediately, a conducta was speedily formed, and proceeded towards Monterey, escorted by three hundred and fifty Austrians, and all the Mexican troops that could be spared from the garrison,—a courier being sent to inform General Douay of what had been done.

The papelito containing this dispatch, and the news of Escobedo's move, *viâ* Linares, in the direction of Matamoros, reached General Douay almost simultaneously. Orders were issued that a column should instantly leave Monterey to meet the convoy, and support it in case of need, for the General fore-

saw that it would be exposed to a surprise by the Liberals who had left Galeana.

These apprehensions were only too well founded, for Escobedo attacked the conducta before its junction with the Monterey column was possible. The Mexican troops deserted the Austrians, who, attacked upon every side, and greatly outnumbered, were killed almost to a man, few prisoners being made. Colonel De Tucé, in command of the column from Monterey, on receiving intelligence that the convoy had been captured, and its escort almost entirely destroyed, of course had nothing left him to do but to retrace his steps, and report this unfortunate affair to General Douay.

Mejia's position at Matamoros was no longer tenable, his garrison consisting only of Mexican troops, and these comrades of the very men who, by their treachery, had contributed to the defeat of the Austrians. Pressed on every side by superior forces, his only course was to make an honourable surrender, and this he succeeded in effecting, permission being given to him and his officers to leave for Vera Cruz by sea.

From this moment may be dated the commencement of the unfavourable turn of affairs for the Empire, for the loss of Matamoros was quickly followed by that of Tampico, and very shortly afterwards by the evacuation of all the north.

About the same time news arrived from Mexico of the departure for Europe of the Empress, the march of Marshal Bazaine towards St. Luis Potosi, and the outbreak of war between Austria and Italy and Prussia; so there was plenty of food for speculation on future events, and most certainly Mexican affairs began to look very gloomy, and supporters of the Empire must have felt anything but easy in their minds.

It was on the morning of the 24th of July that we finally marched out from Saltillo, *en route* for Monterey, and this movement of General Douay's, in support of the subsequent evacuation, was occasioned, I fancy, by intelligence received from General Jeaningros, that the enemy were collecting in his neighbourhood, and that the difficulties of procuring sufficient carriage were great, for a long train of empty carts of every description followed our column. As on all similar occasions, every one held his own theory as to the ultimate objects of the expedition, and surmises were legion. During the thirteen leagues' march to Rinconada, many were the conclusions arrived at, yet I do not expect we were any wiser at the end of our journey than we had been in the early morning. All was conjecture.

The Rinconada is a bright green valley, traversed by clear running streams, shaded by willow and poplar trees,—altogether fresh and bright in

appearance, and very cheering to dust-begrimed travellers. Approaching by a winding descent, you cross the deep bed of a dry mountain-torrent, knocking your horse's legs about in a terrible fashion over the big round boulders strewn upon the path; then suddenly the valley breaks into view, and although the same scene in most countries would not produce, in all probability, any very great amount of enthusiasm, still to us, scorched up by the midday sun, and wearied by the monotonous plains of sand and brushwood we had been marching over, it was the oasis in the desert—the end of a long day's toil, and we were indeed content.

At one time there was a flourishing hacienda here, but at the present moment I do not think there are more than a couple of habitable apartments to be found in the whole pile of buildings, for everything has fallen into the most lamentable state of decay. It is tolerably safe to date all this deterioration throughout the country from the days of the termination of the Spanish rule, for since that period the depredations of the guerilleros have steadily increased, and the want of security discouraging landed proprietors from any attempts to repair damages, apathy and sheer carelessness soon convert a once well-to-do hacienda into a tumble-down ruined group of uninhabited barns, very uninviting to the traveller.

I have a strong recollection of the cold wind and the clouds of dust that swept through our little tent, and ended by putting us into the worst of evil tempers for the greater part of the evening. It certainly required courage, but still De Montholon and I eventually sallied forth, "en costume d'Adam," to take our usual "tub" outside the tent-door, to the great dismay of a fellow-officer of M.'s, who could not imagine any one in his senses braving the adverse elements for the sake of getting rid of the day's dirt. His theory on the subject was charming, for, after gravely assuring us that he felt convinced we had suffered slightly, as regarded our sanity, from the effects of the sun, he proceeded gravely to give us the benefit of his own experiences in "dry-rubbing," for he maintained stoutly that this process answered every purpose, and was, besides, far more agreeable than cold water. I firmly believe he was actually a true disciple of his own doctrine at the time, but latterly I am glad to say he has become a convert to the "religion of cleanliness," and hardly to be recognised as the same man, even by his most intimate friends. Let us hope that he may not soon stray away from the good "groove" into which he has so happily fallen.

It was a bitterly cold morning on the 25th, and the wind blew keenly in our faces as we rode up the steep pass leading from Rinconada to El Alto.

We had misgivings besides as to the possible duration of the march before us, and fears that the breakfast hour might be unduly prolonged, a fair consideration being held for our appetites. Talking of eating led us into a tantalizing conversation about the merits of Véfour's and Tortoni's, and very naturally this led to our foraging during the half-hour we halted at El Alto, to allow the rear-guard to close up with the main column, before descending into the next valley. Luckily we found a basket of eggs in a dirty little fonda, and Ranson, acting as our *chef de cuisine*, made some amends for the rash turn our discussions had taken, by producing a capital omelette. It really was an immense success, and although you did serve it up on a broken soup plate, nevertheless I still tender you my thanks, and render homage to your talents in the culinary line, *ami Ranson*, for that good act you performed in the smoky shed at El Alto. After this halt we descended into the extensive valley leading towards Monterey, only, after all, catching one glimpse of the town in the distance, for we got no further on our road than to the outskirts of Santa Catarina, a large village some two leagues from the town. On the road we had already passed the Belgians and the Mexican cavalry of Quiroga, the advance-guard of General Jeaningros. His main body we eventually found at the village itself, toiling slowly along

with its long train of heavily-laden baggage waggons. After talking for a short time with General Jeaningros, General Douay's column retraced its road to El Alto, and the evacuation of Monterey was completed without any interference on the part of the enemy. It was late in the evening before we were encamped and had breakfasted, and a pretty tiring day we had of it altogether; indeed, the early morning omelette was the only saving clause.

Two days later we arrived in Saltillo, only waiting to evacuate the town and retire on Matehuala. Not a very cheering prospect, for now the rains had fairly commenced, and visions of the deep, black mud of that uninteresting town were only calculated to fill one with feelings of disgust as to our possible sojourn there.

If Saltillo had been a stupid, dull place to us before our departure for Monterey, it certainly was ten times worse after our return. The inhabitants, knowing the occupation was fast drawing to a close, did not dare to show us over-much civility, for they naturally dreaded the reception they might meet with from the hands of the Liberals, who awaited patiently at a respectful distance until the departure of the French should leave the road open to them. In the evening, when the band of the 12th Chasseurs played on the plaza, there was hardly any one to be seen, with the exception of the officers and

men of the garrison; and in the *cercle* there was a gloom cast over the absinthe and even the écarté, for every one saw that before many days we should be again "dwellers in tents;" and packing up traps, and throwing away accumulations of extra kit, are not generally exhilarating amusements or productive of good temper.

There was but one resident of the town, the owner of a large *fabrique* and a good deal of property in the neighbourhood, who was not to be intimidated by the aspect of affairs; for, running his chance of being heavily fined by the Liberals, as an after consequence of his hospitality, he gave us a series of farewell dinners, and I sincerely trust did not suffer on our account after the departure of the French.

Each day troops were marching south, and on the morning of the 4th of August all the arrangements for the evacuation were completed. That day General Douay left, marching seven and a half leagues to Agua Nueva; General Jeaningros commanding the rear-guard, and halting for the night at Buenavista, about four leagues from the town. The next day, the Liberals were in Saltillo.

Most certainly the French troops were not sorry to be off. They were tired of the whole business, taking very little interest in the issue of affairs, and only too glad to imagine themselves at last home-

ward bound. Still, there was many a sad face, and I think many a silent adieu whispered in the hearts of weatherbeaten and toil-stained soldiers, to the memory of those whose bones the fortune of war left far from their comrades in a strange soil—De Briant, Cazes, Rawix, and others who had fallen in the front of the battle, whose resting-places ought to be pointed out for many a long day as holding the ashes of men who were a brave enemy, and nobly accomplished their *devoir*. May they rest in peace!

FOR THE LINE OF MARCH.

CALLE DEL TEATRO, ST. LUIS POTOSI.

CHAPTER XI.

AN EXODUS.

Our descent from Saltillo was a small exodus in its way, for there were many Mexicans too compromised by their adherence to the Imperial party, too openly expressed in their opinions as "mochos,"* to run the chance of Liberal clemency, and remain in

* "Mocho,"—the slang term used by the Mexicans when alluding to the Imperialists.

the town after the French evacuation; accordingly, they had packed up bag and baggage, and accompanied the General's column. They really were to be pitied, although they occasionally amused us all intensely with the relations of their daily misfortunes. It was impossible to make them comprehend any reason for starting at as early an hour as six in the morning, or why we should halt occasionally on the roadside—even when it rained—to allow the column to close up, and the cup of their misery was overflowing on our arrival at Agua Nueva, after two hours' incessant downpour, when they discovered the only accommodation available for all to be in the leaky, flea-inhabited old church.

We marched with a strong advance-guard of cavalry and light artillery, the long, straggling train of carts and vehicles of every description being protected by a rear-guard of infantry and mountain guns; not that we had much to fear from an attack, for the column of General Jeaningros was always one day's march behind us on the road, and the Liberals were far too busily employed quarrelling with each other, and plundering Monterey and Saltillo, to dream of interrupting the evacuation.

Here, in the north, the country is in a far more unsettled state than near the capital. The Gefe de Guerilla is a very important personage, and soon becomes a rich and influential man. After plying

his trade successfully for a few years, he generally finds himself at the head of some three or four hundred men, and in a position to treat with the Government. Frequently, in former times, he would sell his submission, and retire with his loot and the grade of colonel, or even of general, becoming a "great card" in the capital, and looked upon as an exceedingly clever man, deserving well of his country! Generals and colonels are very common articles throughout Mexico, and it is not always prudent to inquire too curiously into their antecedents, for you may fall upon them in different walks of life; for instance, the commanding officer in Orizaba, in January, 1864, was not above keeping a tienda, in addition to looking after his military duties, and was perfectly ready to serve any customer who wanted a dram of aguardiente, with his own hands!

The distance between Agua Nueva and Encarnacion was too long a day's march for our cumbrous column, so we were obliged to halt at Tanque de la Vaca, one of the most disagreeable sites for a camp possible to imagine. There is not a living being at the present time within thirty miles of the place; formerly there was a small colony of Indians, but the guerillas decided amongst themselves that the spot was a very convenient one to stop couriers and rob diligences from; and, in consequence, the vil-

lagers were turned out, and their huts burnt, nothing now remaining to greet the traveller on his arrival but a large tank full of brackish water, and a plain covered with cacti, thorns, and prickles of every description, leaving no open space large enough to encamp any considerable force upon. Besides, the ground is hard and rocky, tent-pegs are scarcely to be prevailed upon to hold, even after the most superhuman exertions; and when the wind rises, you are smothered with dust. Here we had to huddle up as best we could, with our horses' heads almost in our tent-doors, for the grand object was to economize the room. As to the fugitives following the column, they would indeed have passed a rough night of it, had not General Douay ordered the large hospital tents to be pitched for them, for after sundown the air was bitterly cold and raw, and it frequently rained during the night.

To add to all these drawbacks, there were no wayside fondas where these unfortunate people could procure anything to eat, and, as a last resource, all the various messes were put under a contribution; still, although they did not fare so very badly after all, I fancy the ladies lost a good deal of illusion on the subject of soldiers and the delights of soldiering, and must have ended by wishing themselves anywhere, rather than in the midst of a crowded camp and under canvas.

Thus we retraced our steps by successive marches through Encarnacion and St. Salvador to Salado, along the dusty monotonous plains, covered with cacti, aloes, and yuccas—yuccas, aloes, and cacti,—every here and there the prairie dogs peeping out their heads from their large camps, and wondering what in the world all the noise was about. The country could not possibly have appeared more dreary and waste than it really was—no water, and stifling clouds of white dust enveloping the line of march,—not a living being to be seen between the stations, and the only excitement the occasional rush across the road of a long-legged greyhound-looking hare (popularly known in America as the jackass-hare), or the discovery and slaughter of a stray rattlesnake during a halt. Sometimes, but rarely, a troop of horses belonging to one of the haciendas would stand and stare at us, and then, tossing their heads, would gallop madly off helter-skelter through the brushwood, neighing wildly at the unaccustomed sight of man.

St. Salvador has not even the advantage of being a comparative oasis in this desert, and decidedly it may be marked down as one of the most unfortunate villages on the northern road, for, having been the scene of more than one skirmish between the Liberals and Imperialists, and famous for the "courier-stopping" carried on in its vicinity, it

has, of course, suffered from reprisals by both parties, and now is half deserted. Here we heard that a band of guerillas, under, I think, Bustamente, was close to us in the mountains, and the Commandant de la Hayrie, commanding officer of the Bataillon d'Afrique, begged General Douay to give him leave to surprise them by a night march. In the end, however, nothing was done, for later intelligence arrived, inducing the General to countermand the permission he at first gave for the expedition, for it was not considered politic to exasperate the enemy into possible reprisals upon the inhabitants of the towns now in their power, by ferreting insignificant parties out of an extremely difficult country.

After a long, dusty march from Salado, we arrived, on the second day, at Las Animas, only to find the noria* had been destroyed by the enemy, and that it was utterly out of the question to make a halt; in fact there was barely enough filthily dirty water to be procured for the men's coffee, and watering the horses of the cavalry and artillery was quite out of the question; consequently, after halting for an hour, there were six more weary leagues before us to get to the Puente de Vanegas, the nearest spot on the road where water was to be

* Noria,—a description of well, worked by a large wheel; in this case, the wood-work had been torn down, and thrown into the water.

found. That evening it was about six o'clock when our march was over, and the last hour had to be travelled under a heavy storm of rain and wind, not agreeable after the heat and dust; still, the annoyances of the day were soon forgotten when the water came in view; men and horses made a regular rush for the lake; grievances were over, and the tents pitched, fires got under way, and *bidons* filled almost before dark. I can assure you it was not long before the camp fell asleep that night, and the men for picket duty were really to be pitied.

The next morning we reached the little town of Cedral by a cross-road, leaving Vanegas, where we previously halted on our march to the north, on our right. After breakfast, the General pushed on with the cavalry to Matehuala, the rest of the troops following the day after,—General Jeaningros occupying Vanegas and Cedral as outposts.

I spoke just now of the Commandant de la Hayrie; let me tell you of an expedition he took part in some months previously to this, when commanding at Saltillo. At this period, the garrison of Monterey was composed of Mexican Imperialist troops, and the dissidents had been keeping tolerably quiet for some little time; suddenly they sprang into life again, and advancing in force upon Monterey, compelled the Imperialists to fall back, leaving them in possession of the greater part of the town.

De la Hayrie, on receiving information of this, without any hesitation put a hundred and ten men —all that he could with safety take from Saltillo— into carts, and, in twenty hours, made the twenty-nine leagues, to the relief of the Mexicans, arriving in the environs of the town before the break of day. Here he found the position of affairs very far from satisfactory, the enemy proving to be about 1400 strong, and the Imperialists just on the point of evacuating their position as untenable. Having the great advantage of knowing the town well, he decided on risking a *coup de main*, particularly as the dissidents were said to be busily employed plundering and attempting to levy forced loans on the inhabitants. Leaving his carts and mules in an old fort outside the suburbs—the Obispada, —and profiting by the obscurity of the early morning, he boldly marched in the direction of the Grand Plaza, bayoneting all he met on the road. On arriving there, he surprised and put to flight the enemy's pickets, occupying the position just long enough to seize all the important papers of their leaders; then, having repulsed an attempt made to cut off his retreat by the enemy's cavalry, eventually succeeded in regaining the Obispada. The loss of the French amounted to two men killed, the bodies being brought back, and one officer, Captain Bastidon—the same, you

will remember, who defended Parras, after the affair of Santa Isabel,—wounded in the arm and chest by musket-balls. Bastidon, relying on the Liberals not unearthing him, took refuge in the house of some Imperialists he happened to know upon the line of retreat, and, in the end, was very right to have done so. Escobedo's men were so thoroughly demoralized by this sudden surprise, that he could not succeed in persuading them to attack the Obispada, and, indeed, had quite enough to do to rally his men and hold his position on the plaza, for the inhabitants of the town, taking courage, refused to pay the prestamo, and resisted as much as they were able to do. De la Hayrie remained unmolested for twenty-four hours, and, at last, was fortunate enough to make out the dust of General Jeaningros' column in the distance.* Sallying forth, for the second time, at the head of his men, he again attacked the Liberals, who, finding themselves taken between two forces, hastened to make good their retreat, and only just in time, for the cavalry of General Jeaningros, under the Commandant Barbue, drove them along in the direction of China, a village on the Matamoros road, inflicting very considerable loss. Had not men and

* General Jeaningros was on the line of march to Monclova, and, hearing of the state of affairs at Monterey, hurried at once to the assistance of the town.

horses been so thoroughly tired out—they had marched forty-eight leagues in sixty hours,—in all probability the Liberal army of the north would have been entirely broken up on that day, and have given no further trouble.

Still the results were excellent. Escobedo lost over sixty men killed, and a great number of wounded and deserters. The *prestige* of the French was immensely increased, and the Mexican Imperialists vastly reassured by the promptness of the affair. It was regarded, and very justly so, as a brilliant success, and due to the skill and energy of De la Hayrie.

WAYSIDE FONDA.

PLAZA AND CATHEDRAL AT ST. LUIS POTOSI.

CHAPTER XII.

LA GUERRE AUX ADOBES.

THE Fates appeared resolved that we should not carry away with us any favourable impressions of Matehuala, for no sooner did we enter the town than down came the rain in torrents, and the streets were speedily converted into perfect quagmires of mud. The only place I can recollect as at all equalling it in dirt, bustle, hurrying of troops, and floundering about of guns and waggons, is Pehtang in 1860, some few days after the landing of the French and

English forces in the north of China; there it was, perhaps, even a trifle worse.

On marching into the town, we heard the first news of the battle of Sadowa and the fight at Custoza. The Liberals were forgotten for the moment, and all conversation seemed naturally to turn upon these colossal engagements in Europe, entirely throwing Mexican questions into the shade. Not that the dissidents were far off, for they had the temerity to pluck up their courage and push on to Cedral in considerable force, as soon as the French outposts retired on Matehuala. As it was the intention, for the time being, at any rate, to hold Matehuala, it evidently became a necessity to strike a vigorous blow in order to deter the enemy from annoying the garrison after the departure of the main columns, which were directed upon St. Luis Potosi and Queretaro. Accordingly, the evening of the same day that General Douay marched out, General Jeaningros being left to protect the town, the Commandant de la Hayrie, who, like Probyn in India, seemed always to be the lucky man in the way when work was to be done, with his regiment, the Bataillon d'Afrique, and a troop of cavalry, started in two columns towards Cedral, one column following a cross-road at the foot of the mountains, and the other, under his own command, taking the direct road along the centre of the great valley.

By this latter route the distance was betwen five and six leagues, and early in the morning his advanced guard of cavalry surprised the enemy's pickets, driving them through the streets of the town, and cutting off a good number of stragglers. In the end, though, they narrowly escaped being drawn on into a hazardous position, for in the uncertain light they found themselves brought to a standstill by a deep trench newly dug right across the road, and received by a heavy fire from the surrounding houses that occasioned them the loss of several men, and a lieutenant, Perrère, wounded. Fortunately, the infantry and the second column were close at hand, and the Liberals were speedily driven into the open ground behind the town, losing about fifty men, the French force returning to Matehuala.

I am particular in relating this affair, because you will see that later on we were obliged to come back from St. Luis Potosi to give assistance to De la Hayrie, who was, after the departure of General Jeaningros, left in command of Matehuala, with a battery of artillery, his regiment, the mounted company of the Bataillon d'Afrique, and the Mexican cavalry of Colonel Quiroga and Máximo Campos, the survivor of the unlucky expedition to Santa Isabel.

For now commenced the period popularly termed

by the French army as La Guerre aux Adobes;*—trenches were dug out, batteries thrown up, and every precaution taken to ensure the outpost towns against any attack made upon them by superior forces. Matehuala, in a very short time, became a small Sebastopol in its way, and Venado (the next town on the road to St. Luis Potosi, and held in second line in support of the former position), under the hands of the Commandant Dormont and Captain Cardin, two officers of *génie*, would, I expect, have given infinite trouble to, and puzzled the brains of, the Liberal chiefs, had they ever attempted to take it.

On the 18th of August, General Douay arrived at Venado, and most certainly nobody counted upon remaining there for a longer period than a couple of days at the very outside, had not all calculations been thrown out, as you will see, by the Belgian corps and their difficulties.

This force was commanded by Colonel Van der Smissen, an exceedingly brave and accomplished officer, who, I am convinced, would always have sacrificed his own private interests to those of the regiment under his orders. Unfortunately many of his officers found themselves placed in an exceedingly disagreeable and false position. They had originally leave of absence from their respective

* 'Adobes,'—bricks made of mud, and dried in the sun.

corps granted to them by the Belgian government for a period of two years, under a very distinct understanding that should they not report themselves in Belgium at the expiration of such period, they would be considered as having definitely accepted service under the Mexican empire, and their places accordingly would be filled up in the regiments to which they belonged. This term of two years was rapidly drawing to a close, and it was with an intense anxiety to arrive at Mexico, give in their resignations, and embark for Europe, that the greater number of the officers started from Monterey, on their downward route.

Matehuala was not by any means over-garrisoned to resist the possible attacks that might be made upon it by the numerous bands springing up almost daily in its vicinity, and the forces of Escobedo; and it was in consequence of this that Marshal Bazaine directed General Douay to send back the Belgians to reinforce De la Hayrie. This order General Douay forwarded to Colonel Van der Smissen, who, with his regiment, was at the moment *en passage* at Venado. On its reception there was a great outcry amongst the officers, ending, eventually, by their demanding, with the exception of the Colonel and two others, permission to resign their grades and leave at once for Belgium; for they foresaw that, their backs once again turned upon

Mexico, it was almost impossible for them to reach their corps within the prescribed leave of absence. As soon as this decision had been arrived at, Colonel Van der Smissen acted very promptly; leaving these officers to await a superior decision at Venado, he immediately mustered his men and marched back towards Matehuala, inveighing bitterly against his desertion, and declaring his intention not to leave the men under his command, even should he, by remaining, lose all further chance of future advancement at home.

You may imagine the dismay of General Douay, when, the day we marched to Venado, we met these 800 men on the road, with only three officers at their head. There was evidently but one course to follow, for the situation was most complicated and difficult, namely, to send a courier on to St. Luis Potosi, from which city there was telegraphic communication with Mexico, and demand the orders of the Emperor and the Marshal on the subject, awaiting, in the meantime, the result at Venado, from which point assistance could readily be rendered to Matehuala, should subsequent circumstances arise in which such aid should become a necessity.

This General Douay decided to do, and at last, after some delay, the decision from the capital arrived.

Powers were given by Maximilian to the General to name first and second lieutenants in the corps from amongst the second lieutenants or non-commissioned officers. Colonel Van der Smissen was to be ordered back to Venado, and a parade was to be held, at which these promotions were to be named,—the officers who had refused to march being directed to proceed to Mexico. They had, as it happened, already left for St. Luis Potosi, for the General very justly thought that should they remain, disagreeable scenes might very possibly arrive on others being named to fill up their places.

The corps returned at once, and at a full dress parade on the plaza the General passed a minute inspection of the men, at the conclusion of which the new officers were severally proclaimed in the name of the Emperor. A day or two later, the regiment left and after all marched upon Queretaro, and did not go northwards, their departure being generally regarded as a *bon débarras;* not that the French looked upon the men as indifferent soldiers, on the contrary, they were exceedingly clean, well disciplined, well armed, and orderly; but all these difficulties concerned with them had been the cause of a tedious delay to all in Venado, and led to our not starting for St. Luis Potosi until the 4th of September, after a long, tiresome sojourn of seven-

teen days in one of the dullest little towns imaginable.

I can assure you we were very hard put to it to find any amusements to occupy the time during that long halt. De Montholon contrived to build up a dam across the torrent running through the town, and so formed a good-sized pool in which we used to bathe every afternoon,—this and shooting being the only available amusements, the latter sport soon coming to an end, for it did not take many days to scare the hares and rabbits off, too far away from the neighbourhood to make it safe to follow them. A disputed point about the comparative merits of two horses was, however, settled at this time. De Pierres, one of the General's orderly officers, had a thorough-bred English horse, Poisson d'Avril, who had run fairly in France, I being the owner of an exceedingly good Mexican, and I maintained that at a fair difference of weight mine was the best of the two. Accordingly a match was made, the Mexican receiving thirty-four pounds, and the distance being two miles and a half. Every one came out to see the race, which ended in the English horse being beaten half a length,—although he certainly had the best of it for the first mile and a half, much to the astonishment of the "talent," who did not believe any weight would bring them together, all going for Poisson d'Avril.

Still it was frightfully slow work getting through those long days, and we were all delighted to be once more on the move again.

On the 5th we marched to the hacienda of Las Boccas, where the large lake and fine gardens were a refreshing sight to us after the weary, sandy plains, dust, and stunted vegetation of the north; and after breakfasting and taking our siesta under the trees, there was a general rush in the evening into the water,—every one being delighted to take a long swim after the day's work.

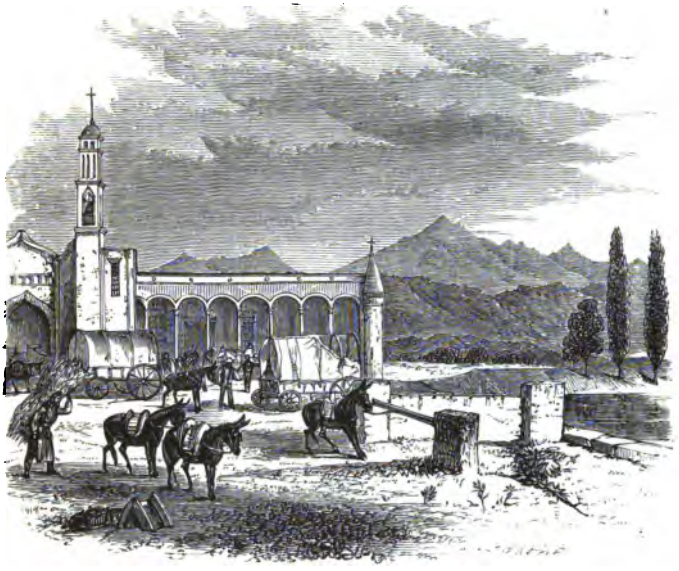
This time we avoided the disagreeable halt of Garrabatilas and passed by the large hacienda of Peñasco, arriving on the 7th at the city of St. Luis Potosi, and comparative civilization.

We now began to be exceedingly curious as to the next move we should take, indulging in rather wild speculations as to the probable movements of the Liberals, the increase of Escobedo's forces, the term of the French evacuation, and what steps it was likely Maximilian would take to maintain his precarious position as Emperor of Mexico, for now it became evident to all that he must rely solely on the support and resources of the country, and give up all idea of aid from foreign Powers.

Still, the intelligence we received from the capital seemed to hint the certainty of his being exceedingly unwilling to abdicate, and his inclina-

tions were generally supposed to be in favour of at any rate not giving up the empire without making one more strong effort to keep the power in his hands.

MEXICAN RECRUIT.



HACIENDA OF SOLIS.

CHAPTER XIII.

HARD MARCHING.

We had a long spell of St. Luis Potosi, for it was the 14th of October before a move was made.

During this period, the position of affairs had not undergone any very important changes. All the north, as far as Matehuala, was of course lost to the empire and in the hands of the Liberals, who, report said, were busily engaged in organizing their forces, and purchasing guns and munitions of war from across the Rio Grande, paying for them with the money they succeeded in screwing out of

the various towns now in their power, by prestamos, or forced loans. These are called loans, on the "lucus à non lucendo" principle, for no one dreams for an instant that they will ever be repaid, come what may. In the course of a short time, the chief under whose orders they have been levied, has either been shot, hanged, or is a thousand miles off in another direction, and the sufferers dare not complain to any other man in power, for in that case they would in all probability be mulcted for double the original fine imposed, and treated as enemies of the "Cause of Freedom." Hence it comes to pass that the rich man accepts with outward tranquillity the first loss, as the least evil that can happen to him—the poor man frequently being shot or hanged for "contumacy"—a refusal to pay being sufficient proof that he is a "mocho," or Imperialist.

The communications between the outpost towns, Venado, Matehuala, and St. Luis, were scarcely interrupted until after the 12th or 13th of October, —not that the enemy were idle all that time, for Treviño, Naranco, and other Gefes de Bandes had established themselves at Vanegas and Cedral. Bustamente had returned with his followers to the hacienda of Salado, and Escobedo with his *corps de réserve*, declared himself ready to march from Saltillo southwards.

As long as they kept quietly at Cedral, and contented themselves by waiting for events, although only six leagues from Matehuala, De la Hayrie, whose force was certainly not strong enough to act on the offensive, left them alone, but gradually gaining courage from this inaction and exasperated at the long delays in the evacuation of the French, they at last began a system of small annoyances. Their principal amusement was to dam up the spring at Ojo del Agua (a small village about a league and a half from the suburbs on the Cedral road) cutting off all supply of water from the town, and although punished pretty severely by several sorties and never succeeding in depriving the garrison for longer than a day, still, daily increasing in numbers, they became bolder, and eventually hardly a night passed without an exchange of shots between the outpost sentries. Very frequently, early in the morning, they would appear in considerable force on a hill a short distance from the suburbs, called El Cerito, and hiding their cavalry behind it, endeavour to induce an attack in the open. But this stratagem did not succeed. The first time it was employed, the French sent out a small force, and succeeded after putting their infantry to flight in keeping the enemy's horse at bay and making good their retreat, with hardly any loss, along the road, the flanks of which being

protected by a wall and ditch were consequently safe from cavalry. Still the experiment, although successful, was too dangerous a one to be repeated, and by the beginning of October De la Hayrie found himself unable to do more than prevent the supply of water being cut, by constantly patrolling between the town and Ojo del Agua. At last his communications with Venado were intercepted, and no more dispatches were received except *en papelito*. When even this mode of sending intelligence became unsafe, it manifestly was necessary to send to his relief.

We had passed by no means a stupid time of it at St. Luis Potosi, for we were exceedingly well received by the inhabitants, who are great mochos, and an English firm, Messrs. Davis and Co., opened their house to the French staff in the most hospitable manner. Then there were bull-fights every week, and crowds of carriages and people each Sunday evening at the alameda; besides, the bands of the Foreign Legion and the 12th Chasseurs played after dusk on the plaza, and there one could smoke an after-dinner cigar very agreeably, being sure of meeting everybody in the place.

We were not very sorry, nevertheless, on the evening of the 12th, when De Pierres interrupted us, in the middle of a rubber of whist at Davis's, with the welcome news that the General had de-

cided to march towards Matehuala on the morning of the 14th, in consequence of the last news received from De la Hayrie, and the fact of the communications being seriously threatened by the assembly of a large force at or near Cedral.

It was a drizzling, damp morning when we turned out of bed on the 14th, and assembled on the Plaza de San Juan de Dios, but every one concerned was very cheery. Those who were left behind to garrison the city contented themselves with the conviction that we should only have very long and tedious marching, and never get a chance at the enemy, chaffing us unmercifully on our prospects when they wished us good-bye on the banks of the river. I was really sorry for De Montholon, whose bad luck and turn of duty kept him from coming with the head-quarters of the division, and left him as staff officer at St. Luis; for he was one of the few who seemed to have an idea that this time our labour would not be in vain.

We had work before us, without a doubt, as far as marching was concerned, for we commenced the first day with eleven leagues to Las Boccas, only halting at Garrabatilas for breakfast. Luckily, the General's column was composed of only cavalry and artillery, so we got over the ground pretty quickly, and between half-past three and four reached the hacienda. Here we met the column of the Com-

mandant Saussier,—500 men of the Legion, four guns, and a detachment of *génie*,—who had left St. Luis the evening before.

The last half of the road was very hot, so as soon as we had found out our billets De Colbert and several of us started for the lake. After the dust and sun-drying of the midday, a swim was decidedly an appetizer,—better than any sherry and bitters,—and we were as hungry as horses by the time dinner was ready, not sitting very long after the meal was over, for I think two pipes saw all the camp to bed that night.

At half-past five in the morning our backs were already turned on Las Boccas, and we had a cold, wet travel of eight leagues to Hedionda, where we halted an hour or so, and then were off again to Venado, five leagues more, arriving on the plaza just before dark.

Here we expected to find news from Matehuala, but there was none; the only piece of information we gleaned being the fact that the column of Colonel De Tucé was before us at Solis, as well as that of Colonel D'Ornano, and awaiting our arrival.

These two forces were mainly composed of the garrison of Venado, so General Douay left some of the Commandant Saussier's men, who had made the same march as the cavalry from Las Boccas, to take their place,—the Commandant Dormont being

given the command, with orders to strengthen the fortifications. This made us think that Matehuala would probably be evacuated, and Venado become the outpost; and we were not very far wrong in our calculations in the end.

There was not much rest for us, for we had ten leagues to travel the next day to Laguna Secca. Just before arriving there we came upon a mule carriage, containing two Mexican ladies and a couple of men, one of them a Yankee. The ladies were recognized by an officer as residents of Saltillo and known Liberals. Accordingly the whole party were conducted back to the hacienda, and their baggage searched. Nothing of any importance turned up, although the *vivandières* of the Chasseurs, after a private interview with the lady travellers, discovered some letters from Treviño hid under their petticoats! They proved to be written to his mistress at St. Luis Potosi, and only stated his conviction that the French would soon be out of the country, and he at her feet certainly within a week or two. He had to wait for some little time, nevertheless. The Yankee was imperturbable, and very difficult to get anything out of. Still, it appeared he had left Saltillo a few days previously, and remained sick with fever at Cedral, unable to pass the lines of the Liberals to Matehuala until he met the people he was now with, who brought him by a

long *détour* again on to the main road without going near the French. At Cedral he fancied there were about 500 men, most of them cavalry and apparently fairly armed, but without artillery, and under the orders of Zapeda, a notorious Gefe de Bande; that they stated they were awaiting Escobedo with his guns, and had a good many more troops near Vanegas. A band had actually stopped them that morning on the road, but, after questioning them, let them proceed unmolested.

After a delay of about half an hour, not being able to get any more information out of the travellers, they were allowed to go their way, and uncommonly pleased the three Mexicans appeared to be. As to the Yankee, I don't think he cared a straw for the whole business; he had already lit a short pipe, and "fixed" himself in a warm corner for the night, so that when he found that he was allowed to "make tracks" he was, if anything, rather annoyed.

We were quartered here in a small house, the owner of which, an exceedingly repulsive old woman, with a vast number of children of all ages around her, was a perfect devil as far as temper went. She refused to give us the room allotted to us, and bringing in her whole family, girls and boys, dared us to undress in it! Of course it was a very one-sided engagement, and we were obliged to

come to a compromise, sleeping that night in the only apartment she would let us have, a store-room, smelling horribly of cheese, dozens being stored on the rafters, and the floor alive with fleas. As it poured with rain, we were forced to stop in it, but had very little sleep between the rats and the vermin, and uncommonly glad we were to hear the *réveil* at six o'clock, and get out of the place, far more tired than we were before going to bed, and in infinitely worse tempers.

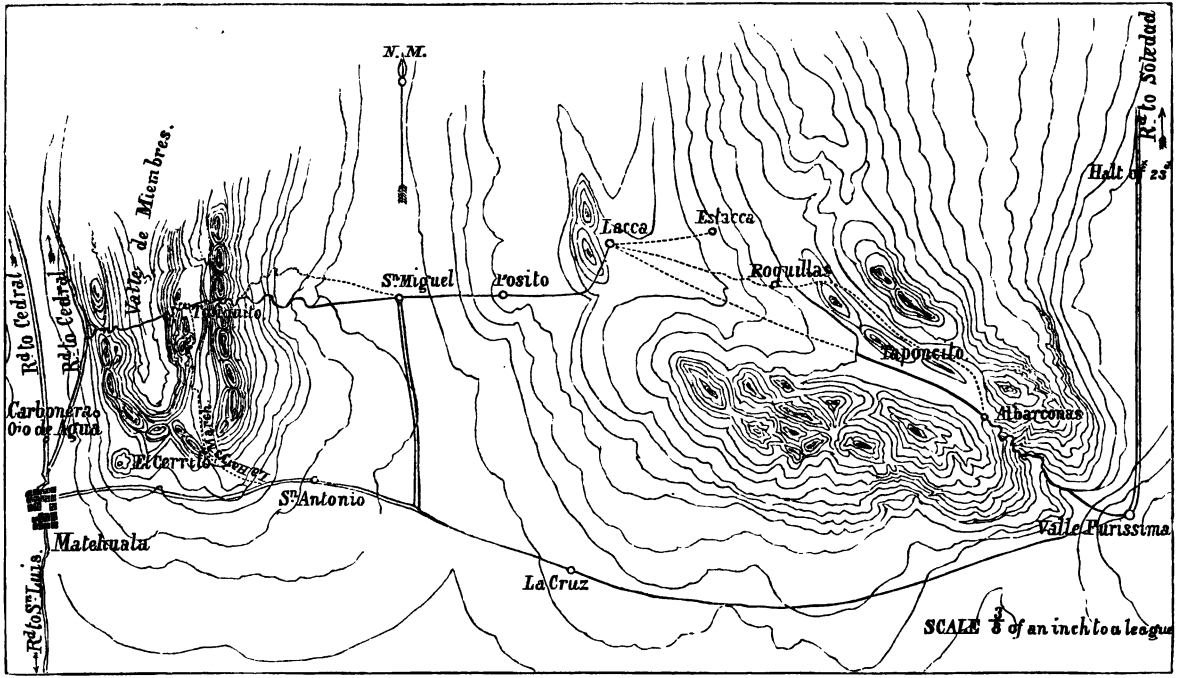
The hacienda of Solis, where we made the *grande halte*, looked a paradise, with its clean buildings and large sheet of clear water, after our nocturnal experiences at Laguna Secca; but the latter half of our nine leagues' march was ankle-deep in sand, and the heat intense, for one could hardly breathe, the clouds of fine dust rising so thickly that it was impossible to see more than a horse's length in advance. On arriving we met Colonel De Tucé, who, after seeing the General, went on with his column and joined that of Colonel D'Ornano at Punta, about two leagues ahead of us.

Late in the evening we had a refreshing shower of rain, and a good deal of speculation as to the turn affairs would take; for as yet there was no news from Matehuala, and it was a question whether we should proceed straight to the town or halt halfway at Las Presas, simply reinforcing De

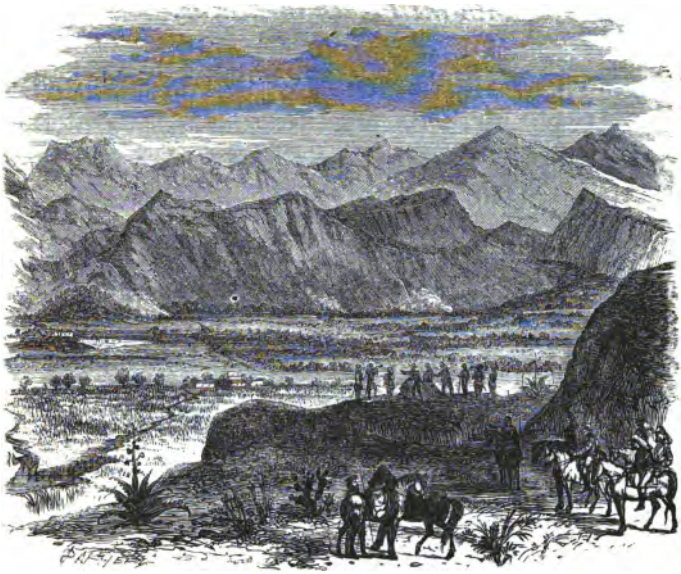
la Hayrie's position by the fact of our being so near at hand. At last a courier arrived, and all uncertainty was soon at an end. The enemy had advanced to Ojo del Agua for the purpose of cutting off the water, and in consequence we kept on to Matehuala, getting in late in the afternoon.

We had marched fifty-three leagues from St. Luis in five days,—pretty hard for our horses, and wonderfully good going for the infantry of the Commandant Saussier, whose column was in the town by nightfall. Still our work was not quite at an end, for the orders were issued for two columns to be ready to march the following morning at 5.30.

12TH CHASSEUR; MARCHING ORDER.



VALLE DE MIEMBRES AND VALLE PURISSIMA.



VALLEY OF MIEMBRES.

CHAPTER XIV.

VALLE DE MIEMBRES.

THE aspect of Matehuala had undergone an entire change during our absence, and it really was a difficult matter to find one's way about the streets, for nearly all of them were blocked up, either at one end or the other, by mud walls or deep trenches, and the baggage-waggons had to puzzle out of a perfect succession of labyrinths before they could bring up on the plaza. There were also evident signs of the proximity of the Liberals; half the shops had been closed, and very few Mexicans

were to be seen strolling about, as of yore, puffing leisurely at their cigarettes and staring at the French for want of anything better to do; an air of desertion weighed upon the place, notwithstanding that the streets were encumbered by orderlies, mules, waggons, and groups of soldiers, hustling and bustling each other about,—all of them apparently engaged on errands which admitted of no delay.

We were all up and stirring long before daylight, for we had to leave our baggage behind us and confine ourselves to absolute necessities, the only carriage allowed with the columns being bât mules. It was about six o'clock before everything was in its place and ready for a start, and a little later the two columns marched off from the cemetery, that of General Douay by a cross-road in a north-easterly direction, and the other, under the command of De la Hayrie, past El Cerito and on the road to Valle Purissima; the intention being to attack the Liberals, who were supposed to be in the Valle de Miembres, in front and rear,—the spies stating that there was no other road but a path between the hills by which they could escape. On this they would meet De la Hayrie, the movement of General Douay preventing them from retreating towards Cedral or Vanegas.

The Commandant de la Hayrie's column was

composed as follows :—The Bataillon d'Afrique, about 500 strong; four guns (*pièces de montagne*); one squadron of the 12th Chasseurs; partisan troop under Máximo Campos, about 100 men; troop of the Présidiales (French), 80 men; and the mounted company of the Bataillon d'Afrique.

General Douay's column consisted of two battalions of the Foreign Legion; the battery Malhié; 12th Chasseurs (less one squadron with De la Hayrie); and the Partisan Troop of Quiroga, about 200 strong,—all with four days' provision, laden on mules.

It was a clear cool morning and for some time we could see the column of De la Hayrie winding along the road until they were hidden from view by the hacienda on El Cerito; just before losing sight of them we could make out their cavalry at a trot, and every one began to get a little excited, the men marching on with a will and getting over the ground at a great rate. After about an hour and a half we halted, and all of us began to examine the slopes of the mountains now between us and the other column through their glasses. It was the Chef d'État-Major, the Commandant Davenet, who was the first to see a cavalry picket of the enemy drawn up in a ploughed field at the foot of the hills, just beyond the little village of Carbonera. There was a great deal of incredulity on the part of

everybody, and a great deal of "chaff;" but when after a while they began to move off and were distinctly visible, he certainly had the laugh against us. Half an hour later we saw vedettes on the eminences to our right, and the General pushed on at a sharp trot, with the cavalry—Quiroga's men—forming his advanced guard.

Turning to the right a little, the ground began to rise, and we pulled up into a walk, for our horses had been at a trot, for some time, the outposts of the Liberals keeping on the ridge in front of us, until we were about halfway up the rise, when they disappeared from view. Halting just before reaching the crest of the line of hills, we dismounted, and the General and his staff went on on foot. From the summit the scene was splendid; right under our feet lay the Valley of Miembres, about a league across and bounded by a dark, abruptly-rising ridge of hills parallel to the line we were on. Close at their foot ran a road leading out of the valley towards the south-east by a narrow, dangerous-looking pass, the gorge of which was covered by a black isolated cerro; whilst right upon the path De la Hayrie would arrive by, large clouds of dust marked the line of march of the enemy, apparently some 2000 strong, and evidently in a hurry, although in good order, for a strong rear-guard of infantry and cavalry, posted behind and

upon a small hill right under the far range, protected their retreat.

Here and there were scattered a few huts, and one small village, with a pond of water and a few trees near it, stood out prominently in the broad valley, covered as it was, as far as the eye could reach, with crops of zacate,* through which the enemy's outposts, scattered in all directions and driven in by our advance, were rejoining their main body without much loss of time.

But we were not yet in the valley, and the heights descended sheer into it by a narrow winding barranca, overgrown, whenever sufficient soil was left uncovered by the large boulders that strewed the hillside, with prickly cacti and thorns. Down this, notwithstanding, it was absolutely necessary for us to go. Turning the range on which we were standing would have been a hopeless journey, and the order being given for the cavalry to dismount, we all led our horses down into the ravine, Quiroga descending further up, with instructions to head the enemy, if he could arrive in time, and prevent their retreat through the gorge before the arrival of De la Hayrie, for whose guns we listened anxiously.

Slipping and stumbling over the rolling stones, avoiding the thorns and briars as much as possible,

* 'Zacate,'—Indian corn used for forage.

we gradually found our way down, losing sight of the valley and the Liberals as soon as we entered into the winding turns of the barranca, and being entirely concealed from their view. Once fairly on the plain, we set off at a sharp trot as fast as we could push our horses through the zacate, for it was over our saddles, the enemy making great efforts to gain the defile, and Quiroga halfway across the valley and making all possible exertions to intercept them. We could now distinctly see that they were nearly all cavalry, the few infantry they had climbing the heights and disappearing from view over the ridge, with the evident intention of dispersing through the ravines, and regaining Cedral or Vanegas. There was still on the cerro, straight before us, a large body of horsemen, their rear-guard, who kept their position and "looked like fighting." As soon as we arrived close upon them, the ground became so broken and dangerous that it certainly would have cost us dearly to attack before the arrival of artillery and infantry, and much against the grain, the halt was sounded, a squadron being sent to support Quiroga, who got into the enemy's last column, and had a hand-to-hand running fight with them nearly up to the gorge, doing some execution and capturing a number of horses and arms, losing himself only a few men wounded.

Loud were the curses and shouts of derision the

Mexicans howled out at us from their position on the cerro, endeavouring by every possible manœuvre to excite us into a forward move; and on our side I fancy there was a fair amount of bad language muttered, if not spoken out, at the manifest disadvantage of ground at which "MM. les Chinacos" held us, at any rate for half an hour, or even more. You must recollect we knew nothing of the country, and could not tell whether these hills descended on the far side into another valley or labyrinth of ravines, or whether a plateau stretched away as far as the next range. The latter proved eventually to be the case, and away to the north-east of the plain ran a bridle path through the mountains, connecting with a road leading to Valle Purissima, by way of Laca, or Lacita. The spies informed us this was certainly impracticable, but it turned out to be just possible; and accordingly the Liberals, after passing the gorge, taking to the left, and skirting the black-looking hill that you will recollect covered the pass, gained the plateau, and headed for this, the only outlet for them to retreat by. As they reached the level ground, De la Hayrie's column arrived, and soon the deep, heavy boom of a gun, then another, then several together, put us all on the *qui vive*, and let us know that the enemy would not after all escape so easily as they imagined. Our opponents on the cerro very soon stopped their

shouting, appearing exceedingly uncomfortable at this sudden attack from another quarter. Soon men on horseback, descending the hillside, apparently brought them orders to retreat, for they began to clamber up the awkward, rough paths, and make the best of their way on to the plateau, and only just in time, for the artillery was up soon enough to give them a few parting rounds from their rifled guns, that certainly had the effect of hastening their steps.

Two or three men, pushing their horses through the brushwood, came blundering down the hill with the intention of getting away up the valley in a northerly direction, most probably with instructions for the Liberals at Cedral and Vanegas; but some of the Chasseurs were sent out, *en fourrageurs*, to stop them; one of them still kept straight on, his companions scrambling up again as fast as possible. Escaping the shots fired at him, once fairly in the open he put spurs to his horse, distancing his pursuers, and turning round to take off his sombrero to them, as one by one, their horses dead beat, they pulled up and retraced their steps at a walk. Belleville, the lieutenant in command, was the last to draw rein, but he was stopped by a thick thorn fence, which "the man on the grey" took cleverly in his stride, and cantered away up the valley, halting several times to look at us

through his glasses. It was about as cool and as dangerous a ride as any one could imagine, and I think everybody was pleased to see the Mexican "pull through" as he did, for beyond a doubt he deserved to do so.

All this time the cannonading was going on, and at last we started to climb out the valley, up the most difficult paths conceivable, where it was almost impossible for the horses to keep their foothold. At the summit we were hardly in time to see the last of the enemy disappear by the defile in confusion, their heads towards Laca, and following the very path our information had stated to be impracticable.

We were now on the large plateau, with a small village called Tankito, a tank of water shaded by a few trees, and small cerros covered with brushwood, dotted here and there before us,—De la Hayrie's column being halted near the entrance of the pass the Liberals had taken.

When we had seen his advanced guard passing El Cerito at a trot, he had caught sight of a large cloud of dust on the road before him. This he naturally thought must be raised by some of the enemy in retreat, and he was enticed on as far as St. Antonio before he discovered that he was only in pursuit of fugitives from the ranchos and small villages around. Retracing his steps, and turning

into the mountain path he had previously passed by on his left, he at last came up with the main body of the enemy, at the time when, after escaping from the Valley of Miembres by the pass, they were in the act of gaining the plateau. The ground was too difficult for cavalry, so dislodging them with his guns, he followed them, driving them from each successive cerro upon which they took up a position, until finally they retreated in confusion by the road through the mountains, much to his astonishment: for, relying on the information of his guides, he made certain that this time the Liberals were actually in a *cul-de-sac*, and that on the arrival of our column there could be no question as to their dispersal or surrender.

At Tankito a council of war was held, and then it was decided that as soon as the baggage mules should have crossed the valley and reached us, the General and the cavalry would push rapidly on, and at any rate give the enemy such a gallop that they would not again meddle with affairs at Matehuala, and leave the coast clear for the evacuation of the town, De la Hayrie following them up at once in order to keep on their traces.

So we halted by the pond, and the sun came blazing out,—the morning had been cool and cloudy as yet,—scorching us up, and giving us fair warning that we should suffer from heat and thirst for

the rest of that day along the rocky, sandy ravines, dusty roads, and country covered with aloes and cacti leading on the way to Laca.

READY TO DNACE THE JARABE.

THE VALLEY OF ST. MIGUEL.

CHAPTER XV.

A HOT CHASE.

THOSE provident men who had taken the very necessary precaution to put crusts of bread and brandy-flasks in their holsters before leaving Matehuala, set to work to make the morning meal, known in India as "chota-hazri," for we were fated to wait for anything more substantial until past ten o'clock at night. Before the mules arrived with the baggage it was past midday, and then the General with the cavalry followed up the pass De la Hayrie and the Liberals had taken. Certainly the guides had some

excuse for saying the road was impracticable to troops, and nothing but the sternest necessity could have forced the enemy to choose such a path. In places the boughs overhung the track,—I cannot call it by any other term,—and everybody had to crouch down on their saddles, whilst large, rolling boulders made the horses slip and "peck" almost constantly, whenever they were not up to their knees in sand, or being pricked out of their senses by the formidable cacti and bush-thorns. This made our pace very slow, but at every few yards we came on evident signs of the hurried retreat; here and there a horse, who could not keep up with the main body, was straying away through the brushwood, his rider having probably escaped danger by hiding down the ravines, until the pursuit should have passed by, and the path was strewed with carbines, stirrups, sombreros, etc. etc. It was not, after all, very long before we came upon the column of De la Hayrie, who sent back to tell the General that the enemy were a very short distance before his advanced guard of partisan cavalry, and flying as fast as their horses could go, but in very fair order.

Turning off to the left, we took across country to avoid clashing with his column, capturing in one of the valleys the mules carrying the Liberals' ammunition, and at last got clear of the pass, finding ourselves on a broad plain of immense extent, slop-

ing gradually towards a village in the centre, traversed by cross-roads, and then rising again until lost in the far distance on the horizon. Just beyond this village, St. Miguel, were the enemy in three columns, going at a wonderful pace, and closely pressed by the partisans, who kept about half a mile from their rear-guard, and formed the advance of De la Hayrie's force. The ground we were on was detestable; at places we had to break into single file to follow the narrow, winding, nullah bed along which we were compelled to march. It seemed as if we should never get on to a road again, although we could see distinctly before us a highway leading through the village, and a cross-road coming from the southward. Little by little the "going" got better, and we trotted again, enveloped by clouds of fine dust, rendering it a matter of impossibility to see where one's horse was putting his feet. At last, arriving at St. Miguel, and getting through the streets, or rather I should say street, just in time to avoid De la Hayrie,—as we turned the corner, back came a Mexican officer with the information that Campos and Quiroga were engaged with the rear-guard of the enemy, who had halted to receive them. It was quite absurd to attempt to see what was going on, the dust being so thick you might have cut it with a knife; but half an hour's sharp trot brought us close on to the partisans, and

the Chef d'État-Major, with Captain de Creny and a few men, started off at a gallop to see what was taking place, taking me with them.

Clear of the dust raïsed by the cavalry, and ahead of the advanced guard, we could make out the position of affairs better, and got a pretty good idea of everything. Ahead of us, and not far from Quiroga and Campos, were the main body of the Liberals; half-a-dozen smaller parties of them keeping on the slopes of the small hills, followed the different paths now beginning to branch off in various directions from the main road, and traverse the country, the aspect of which—we were now fairly across the open plain—had changed considerably, for before us stretched away a country covered with thickets of brushwood and dwarf yuccas, very difficult for cavalry. Quiroga was pursuing rapidly over a dangerous succession of small cerros on our left, having already broken and dispersed the enemy's rear-guard, capturing several prisoners, and inflicting a tolerably severe blow on the already disheartened Liberals, though they hardly required even that extra stimulus to make them fly faster than they had already been doing.

Behind us a dense cloud of dust covered the General, advancing with his cavalry; and ascending the slope, after clearing St. Miguel, followed the column of De la Hayrie, whilst the main body and the

baggage, debouching from the mountain pass, were just commencing the gradual descent of the long plain down towards the cross-roads of the village.

Interrogating the prisoners, we discovered that the force we were pursuing consisted of three divisions, all cavalry, under Treviño, Naranco, and Zapeda,—the whole, about 2500 strong, under the command of Treviño; that there were a few infantry with them, who had been directed to disperse, and rejoin at Vanegas, as soon as the French came in sight at Miembres,—their present point was either Valle Purissima, through Laca, or across the mountains by Estaca to Soledad, where they had a considerable force, and thirteen guns; but that they never dreamt of being pursued with such vigour, counting on the delays we should make for our baggage and infantry, and consequently the order had been given to halt for the night at the hacienda and village of Laca, where they made sure they would be beyond any harm.

We were soon obliged to make a considerable pause before entering the wooded country; but as soon as the columns had cleared St. Miguel, the *à cheval* was again sounded, and we threaded our way along through the bridle paths of the yucca thickets, until we once more found ourselves on open ground, and to our great delight came in view of a small rancho, and a large pond of clear

water, shaded by wide-spreading trees,—an oasis in the desert, and a green spot refreshing to us all, dust-begrimed, sun-dried, and tired out as we were, after our long midday chase. This was Pósito, and here we halted to drink, watered our horses, stretched our legs, and then took the road to Laca, for the General was determined to give the Liberals no rest for that night.

Crossing the high ground before reaching Laca, the daylight was rapidly drawing to a close, and the large pile of mountains before us began to darken and grow sombre, the dust of the flying enemy being barely distinguishable, whilst occasional low deep rolling of thunder in the distance warned us that before long we should have heavy rain down upon us. Quiroga and Campos pushed on, nevertheless, to the last, supported by a squadron of the 12th Chasseurs, and caught the rear-guard once more as the night began to close in, engaging them with success, and killing one of the principal Liberal officers, who, mistaking our partisans for some of his own men, galloped back to them, asking the leading files whether they belonged to Zapeda or Naranco, and was instantly shot by one of them with a revolver. It was eight P.M. when we got out of the saddle, and a pitch-dark night. Standing in front of the hacienda, a few dim flickering fires showed that some of the dissidents had halted at Estaca; but

our "exploradores" reported that their main body had turned to the right, and followed the direct road to Valle Purissima.

The village was almost deserted, and most of the houses strongly barred and locked up, so everybody set to work to break down doors, and find themselves a habitation for the night. It was none too soon to do so, for before we were fairly housed down came a mountain storm, rain in torrents, and it was past ten o'clock before the infantry and artillery were all in, tired out, and drenched to the skin.

That night we breakfasted between ten and eleven,—the only food we had had all day being the crusts of bread at Tankito, and a couple of bottles of wine, the thoughtful De Creny shared amongst us all. The men had had neither the time nor the opportunity to make their coffee, the baggage besides being always too far behind to make it possible to serve out the *goutte;* and now the heavy rain rendering it out of the question to light fires, and there not being enough accommodation to put many of them under shelter, the consequences were that very few got anything to eat but bread until the next morning.

They accepted the position very well, as French soldiers generally do, and by daylight, the weather having cleared up, the camp fires were soon alight; all the pigs and poultry about the neighbourhood

were hunted down, and in a few hours the men had cooked up and devoured that marvellous *soupe*, that they seemed capable of making even out of hedgestakes: their clothes were dried, their arms and accoutrements cleaned, and all of them eager to be off again in pursuit.

Exploradores* were sent out before daylight, for it was evident that the Liberals, tired out and hunted as they were, could not move far. In fact, there were several shots fired at our outlying pickets during the night, proving that at any rate some of them must have bivouacked at no very great distance from us.

It turned out that a small party had gone across the mountains by way of Estaca, and that their main body had passed the night in a large barranca, crossing the road leading to Valle Purissima, about a league beyond Laca. An uncommonly wretched night they must have had, with the heavy rain pouring down in torrents,—no food, and no fires, after their day's ride.

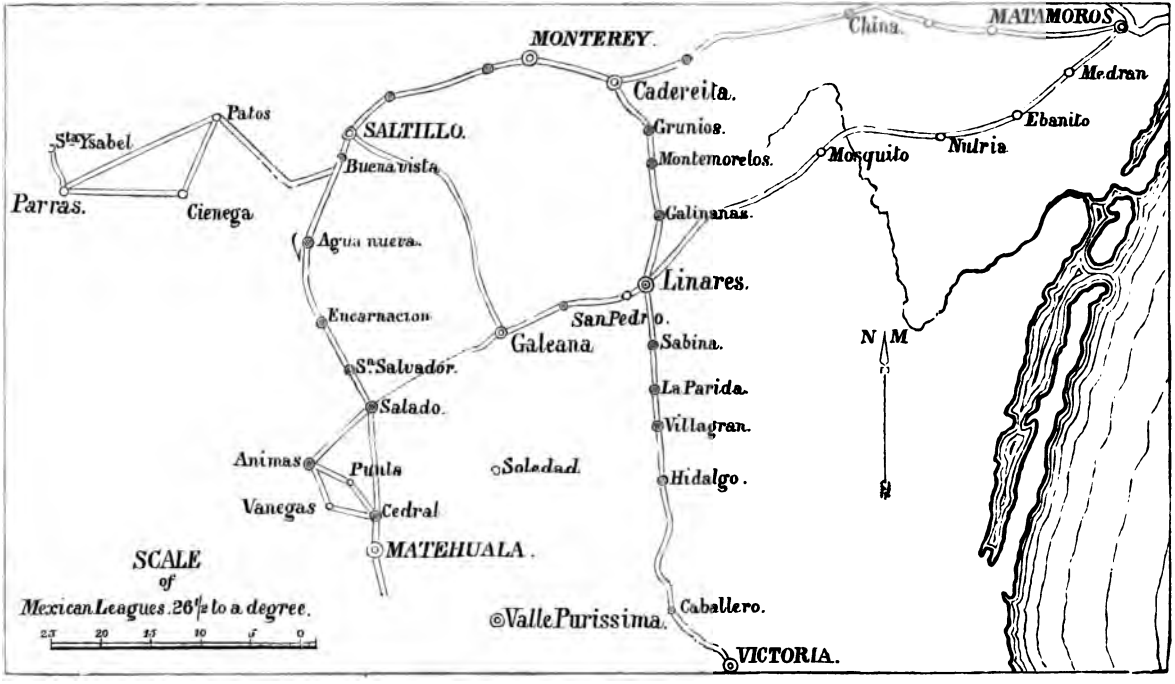
The great question was which road they had eventually taken, for the country was entirely deserted, and it was impossible to get information.

* "Exploradores"—picked men taken from the Partisan troops, chosen for their knowledge of the country, and mounted on the best horses. They were used as spies, or rather "feelers," on every occasion.

The probabilities appeared in favour of their having taken that to Valle Purissima, but still there was no reason why they should not have quitted it again further on, and joined the force at Soledad, across country.

At any rate, the mountains by Estaca were impracticable to us, so the General decided to march to Valle from there. Should they have gone to Soledad, there was a fair road by which we could follow their steps, and drive them into the valley of Potosi, from whence they would certainly not be able to interfere with the evacuation of Matehuala; for there was no secret made now of the object of the expedition, which was simply undertaken to clear the coast of the enemy before retiring again towards St. Luis Potosi.

SOLDIER.



EXPEDITION OF GALEANA.

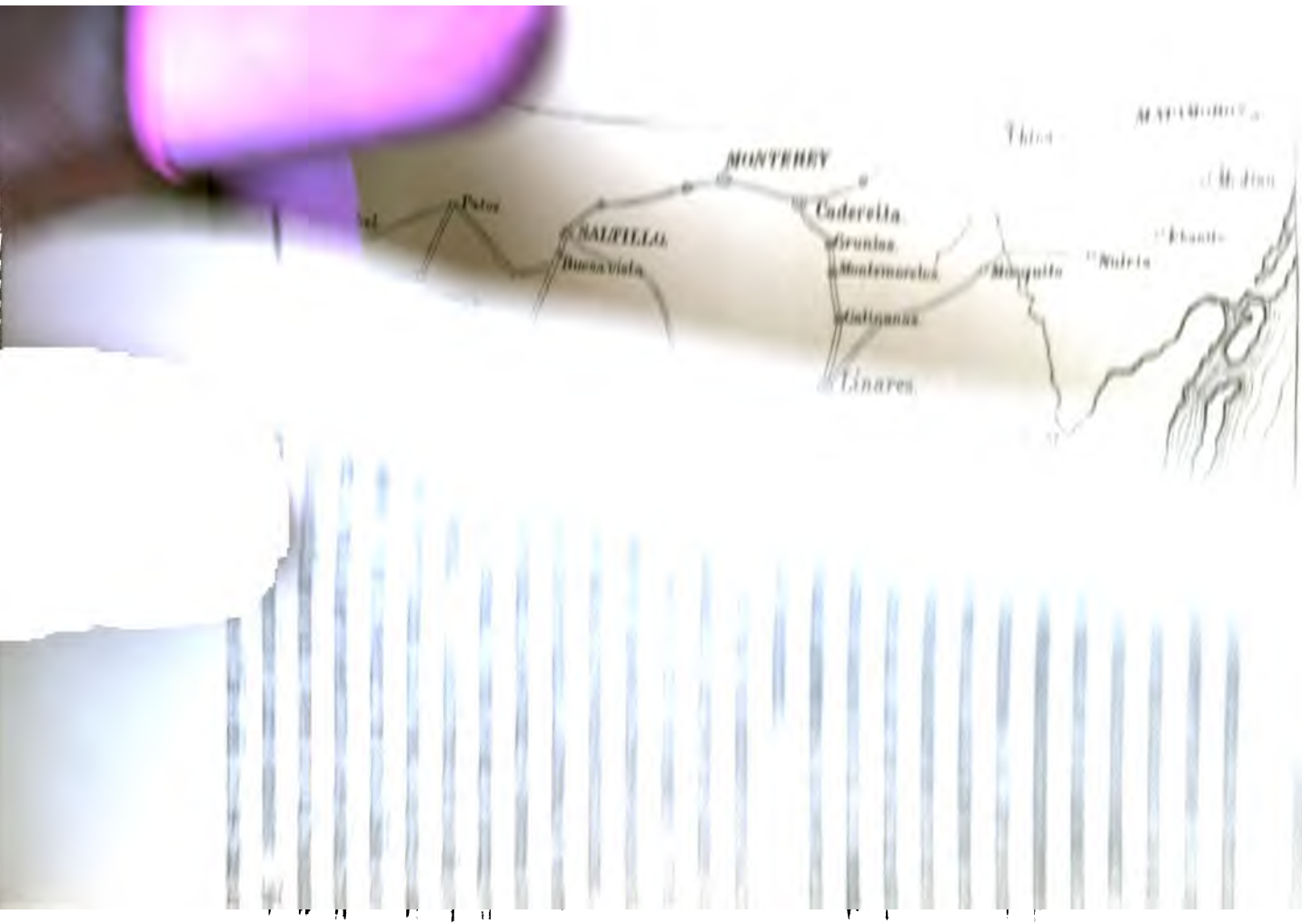
EXPLORADORES.

CHAPTER XVI.

VALLE PURISSIMA.

THE sun came out bright and hot that Sunday morning at Laca, after the storm, soon drying up the mud, and giving new life to the men, who had passed a tolerably rough night.

About eight o'clock we started in two columns for Valle Purissima, the cavalry, under General Douay, by the road crossing the barranca, and the infantry, artillery, and baggage following the low ground, with orders to form a junction with us near Albarconas. A league from Laca we came upon


MONTEREY
Cadereita
SALTILLO
Buena Vista
Linares

ne in view of the plains beneath us, and
es of the range bounding them saw the
houses of the town of Valle Purissima,
ery fresh and picturesque against the dark
nd.

oked quiet; we searched in vain with our
but could not see anything in the shape of
d, and at last began to fancy that, after all,
erals must have doubled on us and got
to Soledad. The barrancas became more and
difficult as we descended into the valley; in
n places, it became necessary to set the pio-
to work in order to make the path practicable
he artillery and baggage mules.

hen two or three men on horseback were des-
d watching us from under a large group of trees
r the suburbs, and on their turning about as we
vanced, and taking the Soledad road at a gallop,
made up our minds that there was nobody in the
wn of Valle. We discovered the truth from some
ndian villagers before long; a few of the fugitives
assed through early in the morning, but pushed on
after getting some food, telling the people that their
force had gone, some by Estaca, and some across
the mountains to join the dissidents at Soledad.

The end of the business was, that at about two
lock we marched quietly into Valle Purissima,
ding the town almost deserted, the only inhal

ants being a few Indians straying about the streets, the fruit-sellers on the market-place, and a good number of the fair sex, who gazed curiously at us from their balconies as we passed along the streets and on to the plaza. Where their husbands were the mischief only knows; possibly, and very probably, we had been hunting them the day before, for the locality has the reputation of being excessively Liberal.

What a good siesta we all went in for that afternoon! and after tubbing and dinner were over and a pipe or two smoked, it was with the pleasant prospect of a "lie-in-bed" the next morning that we all turned in, for there was no positive information of the enemy, and men and horses were beginning to show evident signs of fatigue; besides, bread had to be made in the case of our going on to Soledad; therefore, for these reasons, the General had ordered a halt, sending out "exploradores" to find out the whereabouts of the dissidents. Honestly we had need of twenty-four hours' rest; recollect, we had already marched fifty-three leagues in five days on arriving at Matehuala, and the following day had that long chase to Laca, in the saddle from five in the morning until eight in the evening, getting over —allowing for all our windings and *détours*—at least some fifteen leagues of ground, then, after a night's drenching, did nine leagues to Valle, the

total proving that there was no "child's play," as far as the distance got over was concerned.

There was a great meeting in the morning before breakfast, at the matutinal absinthe hour, when we discussed what had taken place, what probably would take place, and affairs in general.

The horses of the 12th Chasseurs were picketed on the plaza, and it was positively a pleasure to see how most of the little wiry Arabs had picked up, even by that one night's rest, although there were still some "awful legs," bearing testimony to the long marching and the effects of cacti thorns. The amount of work, and rough work too, that these horses had gone through in Mexico, was really wonderful; although by no means as handsome or blood-looking as the Arab in India, they are certainly as enduring, and, if anything, a trifle harder under bad circumstances. In this regiment, for instance, for four years they had been continually on similar expeditions to the one we were now engaged upon, the cavalry having by far the hardest time of it, constantly on picket or patrol duty, escort, or keeping the communications open; it was the exception when they were fortunate enough to have a halt for more than twenty-four hours at a spell. The fact is, the French had far too few cavalry in the country for the kind of warfare they were engaged in, and this led to the formation of

troops in the Foreign Legion, partisans, the Présidiales, etc. etc., who were naturally looked upon as very irregular, and regarded with jealous eyes by the Line, for they argued it was at any rate hard upon their branch of the service to exclude other regiments, in France and Africa, from the chance of winning honours, and seeing fighting abroad, by substituting in their place "make-shift horse."

In the course of the day the exploradores brought in news that the enemy were at Soledad, and had also halted, the wretched condition of their horses and sore backs rendering it impossible for them to move; that they talked of waiting for us, should we march against them, having regained fresh courage on joining their comrades, who rejoiced in the possession of thirteen pieces of artillery.

The General decided to make them move a little further at any rate, and in the afternoon orders were issued for a march at six the next morning, and there was pretty hard work to arrange commissariat matters, for three out of the four days' provision with which we had started from Matehuala had been consumed, and Valle was not rich in resources.

Accordingly, the 23rd saw us once again on the road; but after accomplishing a good half of the distance to Soledad, we heard that Treviño and his guns had left early in the morning in the direction

of Valle Potosi. This changed all plans; the infantry and the baggage received the order to retrace their steps to Valle Purissima, and after halting at a small rancho for breakfast, and giving them time to get well before us, the General and the cavalry returned, the fact of Soledad being abandoned having been quite confirmed by the exploradores.

The object of the expedition being accomplished, the next day we started back for Matehuala, halting halfway at a wretched village called the Rancho de la Cruz, it raining all the time we were on the road.

On leaving Valle Purissima, Quiroga and Campos made a "leva." Now a leva consists in simply making prisoners, by fair means or foul, of all the able-bodied men of a town or village, who find themselves unable to pay a fixed sum. As soon as they have been taken too far from their homes to render escape possible, a gun is put in their hands and they are turned into soldiers. Formerly this was the only plan adopted for recruiting the Mexican army, and it has been constantly in use amongst the Liberals. The Emperor, on his arrival in the country, at once established a form of conscription, somewhat upon the French system, and declared the leva to be abolished as a barbarous custom and unworthy of being followed by a civilized government. Yet the conscription failed, and at last,

forced into a corner, the Imperial government were compelled to come to a resolution that the leva must come into force again, for without it they could not raise sufficient soldiers to make any head against the dissidents, who, thoroughly unscrupulous as to their actions, now that the French evacuation opened the north to them, found men in any numbers, and rapidly doubled, or even trebled, their forces. This was the commencement of the reoperation, and all the men in the town were taken by Campos and Quiroga, and led off as prisoners.

Right away through the suburbs, and far along the road, our column was followed by their wretched wives and families, screaming and crying to the French to give the order of release. But the French had very strict orders to interfere in no possible manner with anything concerning the arrangement of the Mexican affairs, particularly the interior working of their military schemes, and consequently were utterly helpless, although their indignation was great, and I am convinced nothing would have given the General greater satisfaction than to have been able to let the men go, but it was impossible; and from this day levas were continually made by the Imperialists as well as the Liberals, until at last, except by the old men and women, every village was deserted as soon as troops came into the vicinity.

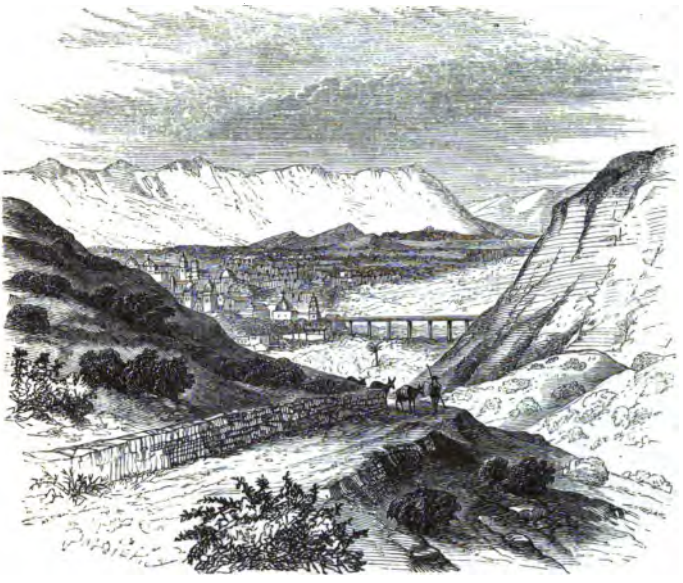
From La Cruz eight leagues more brought us into Matehuala, passing by St. Antonio, El Cerito, and the road by which De la Hayrie advanced towards Tankito on the 20th.

The 26th we halted, and the 27th the column of Colonel De Tucé left for La Presa, and the evacuation commenced. Destroying the works, and carrying with them all stores and *matériel*, by Sunday, the 28th, the last Frenchman was out of the town, the force under the General, consisting of cavalry and artillery, marching out at 5.30 A.M., and halting about a league out, until De la Hayrie was clear of the suburbs. There was no disturbance, no riot; the Liberals were miles away, and the inhabitants were only too sorry to be left to themselves, and I am sure would have been delighted beyond measure had the occupation been prolonged for any length of time.

That night we slept at La Presa, and the following day went on to Laguna Secca, fourteen leagues,—from there to Venado, and arrived on the 2nd, once more in St. Luis Potosi, our downward march being almost as rapid as our upward one had been a few days before, for it was hastened by the intelligence that St. Luis was to be speedily left to its fate, with Mejia to defend it, and a small French contingent,—General Douay retiring upon Mexico.

In the meantime, rumours were rife that Maximilian was gone to Orizaba, and would probably abdicate. All seemed to go against him; the Austrians had been defeated by Porfirio Diaz at Carbonera, on the road to Oajaca, and this latter city must evidently be lost in a few days. In fact, it was a regular case of "Tout va mal pour l'Empire Mexicain."

PRESIDIALE.



QUERETARO.

CHAPTER XVII.

GOING BACK.

We were not sorry to be back at the head-quarters of the division, and the good people of St. Luis welcomed us as heretofore—heartily. The few days we had before us to remain in the city were fully taken up by all the preparations for our final departure, and the time drew rapidly to a close, for instructions had arrived from Mexico, appointing an early day for the move to the south, and regulating the order for the departure of the various corps upon Queretaro.

On the 6th, the column of De la Hayrie passed through, only halting for a day, and on the 8th General Douay was to leave,—a small French force, consisting of some infantry of the Foreign Legion, part of the battery Mailhié, and a squadron of the 12th Chasseurs being left behind under the command of Colonel Guilhem to support the Mexican troops of General Mejia, but only in order to give him time to organize his force to some extent, and put the defences in order, on the completion of which they too were to retire to Queretaro.

Mejia had arrived in St. Luis during our absence at Valle Purissima, and had been entrusted by the Emperor with the command, bringing with him a good reputation as a firm and honest supporter of the Imperial cause. He had certainly not been fortunate, for he had been compelled, as you will remember, to surrender the town of Matamoros to the Liberals, after the defeat of the Austrians and the capture of the great convoy. Still, he had proved himself not only to be a brave soldier, but a clever diplomatist, from his conduct when a United States' negro regiment revolted, crossing the Rio Grande, and sacking Bagdad. The position was then a most difficult one, and it was mainly owing to Mejia's exertions that matters were eventually compromised without any loss of prestige on the side of the Imperialists. In personal appearance he is the reverse

of striking, being very dark, in fact a full-blooded Indian, and born in the Sierra Gorda, where his influence over the people is enormous, and whatever he may order is law, even for the most lawless of its inhabitants. Suffering from constant attacks of fever, thwarted by want of money, and compelled to raise loans to maintain the troops under his orders, his position in command of St. Luis after the departure of the French was by no means an enviable one, and it is scarcely to be wondered at that he soon found himself forced to retire in his turn, when the Liberals advanced upon the city,—for although the population is very mocho, they could actually lend him but little material assistance.

It was not without universal regret that we bade good-bye to the old place, for we had become somewhat attached to it after so long a sojourn, and left many friends behind us.

Davis and Co. gave us a farewell supper the night before our departure, and we did not break up the party until it was time to get into our saddles and be off,—this time without the shadow of an apparent chance of our ever coming back again,—turning our backs for good on the bull-fights, the Alameda, and all the hospitality people had shown us.

There was nothing out of the way to record on our backward journey, the distance between St. Luis

and Queretaro being marched in seven days, and the halts almost identical with those we had made on our way northwards in May and June. Every one had an idea that, at any rate for some little time, we should be stationary at Queretaro, and on the 14th, when we arrived, made up our minds for a delay of at least a few days. Here we found General Jeaningros, who gave a grand breakfast to General Douay and his staff, that lasted until between three and four o'clock, and was not calculated as a good foundation for a start the next day. However, start we did, and went as far as Colorado, encamping and passing a bitterly cold night. The 16th we reached San Juan del Rio, catching up the column De la Hayrie, and the 17th marched into Arroyo Sarco. Here we found very evident signs of the times; the telegraph wire cut on both sides, between Mexico, and also between St. Luis and the post. Not contented, apparently, with doing this, the bands in the neighbourhood had collected, and menaced the little garrison several times, by forming in force on a hill upon the further bank of the river. We heard, besides, the report, pretty generally received as true, although always contradicted by the Estafette, that the United States had come to an understanding with France as to the future of Mexico, and the only hitch in the business was occasioned by the refusal of Maximilian to abdicate.

In fact, there was no *canard*, however ridiculous and far-fetched, that did not meet with a good number of people always ready to vouch for its truth, and prove mathematically its probability.

Our next halt was at La Cañada, one of the haciendas belonging to the family of the Iturbides, very well kept, and picturesquely situated at the foot of the mountains. Passing through Tepeji del Rio, we encamped the 19th at San Miguel, hurrying on as fast as we could past Cautitlan, and reaching Tlalnepantla the following day. On this line of march, as we came upon the presa of San Miguel and mounted the chain of hills beyond it, on coming in sight of the great lakes we saw a strong body of guerillas in the plain beneath us. Evidently their intention had been to waylay the *diligence* with the mails, and they were exceedingly astonished to see a French column on the road,—making the best of their way off across country as if the devil was after them. The chances are that these were the very men who had robbed the correspondence from Mexico for several successive days, and who, gradually increasing in strength, eventually attacked the post at Cautitlan; but they had too good a start of us, and the ground was too dangerous, to render it even possible that we could do them any harm by sending cavalry in their pursuit.

At Tlalnepantla we received the order to halt for a day, and on the 22nd marched into Mexico, our work in the north of the country being over. General Jeaningros remained in command at Queretaro, and after a short delay Colonel Guilhem's force evacuated St. Luis Potosi, soon followed by Mejia. This was the French position until just before the departure of the troops from Mexico. Then the garrison of Queretaro retired on the capital, leaving Miramon to watch over the protection of the Imperial cause; Maximilian himself soon after taking the field, and assuming supreme command of all his forces.

THE QUADRILLA AT A MEXICAN BULL-FIGHT.

MEXICO; FROM PHOTOGRAPH BY C. AUBERT.

CHAPTER XVIII.

IN DUBIIS.

DURING the month of December, reports were current that Maximilian, still at Orizaba, would very shortly abdicate; and certainly, judging from the outward appearance of events, it seemed to be the only prudent course left for him to adopt.

Looking back, the retrospect of 1866 was the reverse of cheering. Not a single step had been made in advance; on the contrary, there was a steady loss of territory, power, and prestige to be recorded, commencing from the date of the loss of Matamoros, and continuing in an unbroken series

of disasters until, at the present moment, the enemy was literally at the very gates of Mexico.

Amongst other causes, the unsettling reports published in the newspapers, and the thousand and one false rumours constantly flying from mouth to mouth, through town and city, spreading far and wide over the country, were an immense discouragement to the mochos, who never knew what really to believe, and ended by giving credence invariably to the worst.

At one time, the Emperor was immediately to take the field and lead a crusade against the enemies of his Government and the public order; a few days later, he had dismantled his palace, and was on the point of leaving for Miramar, placing the government in the hands of Marshal Bazaine; and then the French had concluded a treaty with the United States, Juarez was to be recognized, and a large slice of territory sacrificed to appease the disciples of the Monroe doctrine. In short, no report, however far-fetched, ridiculous, or improbable, failed in unsettling the minds of the Mexicans, and spreading a fatal uncertainty and want of confidence through the ranks of the Imperialists, —so weakening little by little, and sapping at the very foundations of the already tottering fabric of the Empire.

Take a map of Mexico, and judge for yourself

of the actual position of affairs with which the year 1867 was inaugurated. All the north is in the power of the Liberal party. In Tamaulipas, one of the richest and most fertile districts in the country, it is long since the Imperialists have held an acre of ground. Matamoros and Tampico, two of the principal seaports on the Gulf, with their custom-houses and the revenues derived therefrom, are lost. In Sonora and Sinaloa, the leader of the dissidents, Corona, occupies Guaymas and Mazatlan, taking barbarous reprisals on all who have opposed him, either by word, deed, or even neutrality. Guadalajara and Guanajuato have been captured by the enemy,—Mejia only holding St. Luis Potosi from day to day, being eventually obliged to evacuate it. Porfirio Diaz reigns in the State of Oajaca, having defeated the Austrian and Mexican troops sent against him. Yucatan, although loyal, is constantly disturbed by guerillas and uprisings; and finally, there are bands at large in the very Valley of Mexico itself, and the road between the capital and Vera Cruz is infested with highway robbers.

Beyond a doubt matters looked very black and gloomy, for there was no longer any question as to the expeditionary force leaving the country to its fate within two or three months' time, and the hearts of the "mochos" must have smote them,

that, when they had all the advantages of the French *appui*, instead of putting their shoulders to the wheel, they had been loth to make even the smallest sacrifices towards the support of order. Acting like children, they imagined that as their property was for the moment protected by foreign bayonets, so they would always be defended against the guerillas, who now were at their very doors. Safe for the time being, too indolent to adopt measures calculated to produce them an ultimate benefit, when reports arrived that the Liberals had occupied such or such a town, raising forced loans, confiscating property, etc. etc., although probably for the moment they had their misgivings,—yet in a short time all foreshadowings of disagreeable events were put on one side as annoying, the future danger was disregarded in face of the present safety, and procrastinating until the moment for self-preservation was too late, they now had no resource left to them when the storm broke over their heads but that of mutual recrimination and discontent.

It was at this crisis that the Emperor called a meeting of his Council at Orizaba, in order to decide whether, for the good of the country, it would not be advisable that he should abdicate, placing the power in the hands of the people, from whom he had received his crown.

The Council—influenced by their own dangerous

position, and backed up by the Church party, who were beginning to see that unless they could succeed in propping up the tottering foundations of the Empire, their rights, property, and privileges must inevitably go by the board—opened their eyes at last to the absolute necessity of immediate action.

They declared it necessary for the preservation of order that the present Government should be sustained, offering to Maximilian the services of Miramon and Marquez, the two champions of the Church party, who, good soldiers and brave men, though not over-scrupulous as to the means they employed, undertook to raise troops and lead them against the enemy, provided they were given full powers, and not rendered accountable to any authority for illegal acts.

The decision of the Council was upheld by all those who were compromised by their adhesion to the Imperial cause, for, judging from precedents, they had little hope of forbearance to expect at the hands of the Liberals, who at the very least would be sure to confiscate their lands and property, and very possibly might gratify the passions of their followers by hanging or shooting the most prominent and richest of their opponents, as they had already done in Sinaloa, and in the north.

Finally, Maximilian agreed to a compromise, and matters stood as follows :—

The services of Marquez and Miramon were ac-

cepted, full powers being delivered to them to raise troops by whatever means they chose to adopt, every assistance in the way of supplies of arms and money were to be furnished them from all available resources, and authority was given them to raise forced loans whenever and wherever they pleased, in order to defray the expenses of their armies. In the meantime a "Junta" was to be called of all the notables available, and by the decision of this conference, it was finally to be settled whether the Emperor remained in power or another form of government should be adopted. On their side, Marquez and Miramon engaged to march at once with all the men they could collect, and, in conjunction with Mejia, endeavour to strike an effective blow, and recapture the towns and territory lost to the Empire by the French evacuation.

Between the French and Liberals it now seemed to have been tacitly agreed that the departure of the expeditionary corps should be carried on without obstruction from the latter, and hostilities had almost entirely ceased. Occasionally, indeed, there were skirmishes with the guerillas, who neither possessed nor made common cause with either side, simply robbing and plundering whatever they came across; but these were affairs of very minor importance, and one had become of late so habituated to them that they attracted very little notice.

After the decision of Orizaba, the Austrians were called upon to elect whether they would accept service as Mexican troops, or return to Europe; very few, except in the cavalry, adopting the former course. The truth was, the infantry had been most unfortunate in their encounters with the enemy, being almost invariably unsuccessful, and they ended by losing all heart for the cause of the Empire; whilst the cavalry, on the contrary, had defeated the Liberals whenever they came across them.

In order, perhaps, to realize the position more thoroughly, it is necessary to recollect that the Church party, exasperated by the unfair treatment of Juarez, had in the very first instance invited Maximilian to the rescue of Mexico, imagining that the action of his Government would, in consequence, be so favourable towards them as to lead to the Church not only receiving back her confiscated property and abrogated privileges, but possibly to her being rewarded by additional extension of power and increase of influence. Maximilian did not satisfy them by sufficient concessions. He wished, on the contrary, to bring the clerical power under the influence of the civil law, as well as under the orders of Rome, and so keep a certain hold upon so powerful a party. This by no means contented their expectations, and, little by little, a breach formed, ending in a complete rupture, forcing

the Emperor to look for support to those of the Liberal party, who although not openly his enemies, were many of them secretly anxious for his downfall, and the re-establishment of a form of government under which more licence and peculation would be possible.

To give you some idea of the train of events leading to this result, I will relate you a couple of facts.

On the arrival of the Emperor in the country, the Church party demanded immediate restitution of all their confiscated estates. Upon this, Maximilian ordered a commission to be formed to inquire into the extent, value, localities, etc. etc., of such property, and the amount of indemnification that ought to be paid to the present occupiers, who had purchased their titles, the greater part of them with hard cash, from the Republican Government.

This did not at all suit their views, and not being able to persuade the Emperor to make the unconditional restitution they had relied upon obtaining, the clericals refused to administer the offices of the Church to those holding any of their former property, and even to some of the officers of State.

Again, wishing to establish a control over the country, Maximilian ordered civil registers to be kept of all marriages and deaths. This exasperated the clergy to such a point that it was made a *sine*

quâ non before administering the last sacraments to those about to die, that they should first sign a paper expressing their disapproval of any such measures, and belief that they were contrary to the laws of religion!

Now they found themselves on the point of falling from the frying-pan into the fire,—from the hands of an Emperor inclined to conciliate them, and who only desired to establish some sort of order and morality among their ranks, into the power of the Liberals, who decidedly would make the very fact of their having invited Maximilian into the country an excuse for ill-treatment, and the legal plunder of what property still remained to them. Foreseeing all this, they made the first overtures of conciliation, and offers of substantial aid to the Imperial Government,—the Bishops, as a commencement, and guarantee of their good faith, giving thirty millions of piastres towards the establishment of the army.

It was thus by a curious combination of circumstances that the Emperor again found himself trusting for support to this still powerful party. From this moment the aspect of matters underwent a violent change, for all of a sudden his army sprang into new life, money was plentiful, and the two most able generals in Mexico declared for his side.

The intense jealousy arising from the occupation

of the country by foreign troops being removed, the contest now remains one of Mexican against Mexican, and there can be no possible reason why the Imperialist party should not prevail, if for once in their lives people will pull together and strive to push their boat through the dangerous rapids and currents they are now struggling amidst.

GUARD PALATINE OF MAXIMILIAN.

HILL AND FORT OF GUADALUPE, NEAR PUEBLA.

CHAPTER XIX.

THE DILIGENCE.

THERE was not much more to be seen by remaining any longer in Mexico, for, as the days of the French occupation drew to a close, an air of uncertainty and distrust seemed to overshadow the whole city. The opera troupe moved off, bag and baggage, to the Havana; even some of the principal houses of commerce began to wind up their affairs, whilst all people of French nationality, and those who had been in any way compromised by their relations with the army, made their preparations for a start, on the very natural presumption that should the

Liberals ultimately get hold of them, their chances of meeting with fair treatment would be indeed precarious.

Maximilian, after all the rumours of his abdication, had moved from Orizaba, and was now at Puebla, the guest of the Bishop, and living in his palace, having openly accepted the assistance of the Church party, and being firmly resolved to show the world that at any rate he would not surrender his Empire without striking a blow for it. There were daily reports of his arrival at Mexico, but he still remained on the road, anxiously awaiting the news of Miramon, who had already departed with some 2000 men towards Queretaro.

There was a considerable delay at Mexico at the present moment, for the troops coming back from Mazatlan, on the Pacific, after travelling by sea as far as Tepic, had the whole breadth of the country to traverse before reaching the capital; and, as a simultaneous evacuation had been decided on, it became necessary for the Marshal to remain in Mexico, General Jeaningros still holding Queretaro, General Douay, Puebla and the surrounding districts, and General Clinchant, Orizaba.

Convoys were constantly leaving for Vera Cruz, the port of embarkation, with the heavy guns and immense *matériel* of the French. Still, with all this constant marching of troops, the road by *dili-*

gence was extremely unsafe for travellers, who were stopped almost daily, although not often robbed or maltreated. The Liberals seemed certain that at last their day was on the point of arriving, and began to be careless about plundering individuals, being only anxious to see the departure of the French, and find the large cities at their mercy. Coming up from Puebla to Mexico, there were some Austrian officers travelling, who were recognized by one of these guerilla bands. Naturally they expected to be either hanged or made prisoners, at the very least. Not at all; the chief of the party told them that, as all foreigners would be compelled to leave the country very shortly, in the meantime the presence of two or three more of them could not possibly hurt his cause, and ended by allowing them to pursue their journey, absolutely without robbing them.

Mejia was eventually forced to retire from St. Luis Potosi, and fall back on Queretaro, not being sufficiently strong, after being left to his own resources by the departure of the French, to hold the city. He now was waiting for the arrival of Miramon, who had already defeated the Liberals at Cautitlan, and succeeded in clearing the high-road of several bands who infested it, on his march towards the north.

There was one notable exception amongst the

ranks of the dissident party—Porfirio Diaz, one of the best leaders of the Juarez side, and a man who showed an example of humanity and justice to his colleagues. Not long before, he had defeated the Austrians and Imperial troops at Carbonera, subsequently capturing Oajaca; and now we heard that, acting with a true soldier-like spirit, he had erected a monument over the bodies of those who had fallen fighting against him,—publishing, at the same time, an order, in which he put forth the principle that both French and Austrian soldiers only performed their duty in opposing his cause, and that it was an action unworthy of those who professed to support "Liberty," to dishonour her name by violent reprisals, the shooting of prisoners, or failing in respect to the remains of those killed on the scene of action.

Had the Liberal party been fortunate enough to have had many leaders like Porfirio Diaz, there can be little doubt that their cause would have prospered; but when opposed to this single example of humanity and proper feeling there were men like Bustamente, Corona, Pedro Martinez, Romero (very justly shot by the French), Simon Cravioto, etc. etc., it was not to be wondered at, that all the respectable part of the population drew away, and a revulsion of feeling gradually drove the tide of favour back upon Maximilian.

The position, had the Emperor abdicated, would have been for the French extremely difficult, for they could hardly have treated with these dissident leaders, or even with Juarez himself, who by his silence and inaction had tacitly sanctioned, all along, the excesses perpetrated by his generals.

Mexico ought, by this time, to be well accustomed to a state of anarchy and confusion, but she had never been previously in such a thoroughly unsettled state as in the commencement of 1867.

The Liberals held the greater number of towns and districts, but were already divided amongst themselves, quarrelling over their plunder, and fighting for position and place,—neither by any means decided as to the proper man to name President, caballing first in favour of one general, and then of another.

On the Imperial side, Maximilian, by his last proclamation, since accepting the propositions of his Council and the services of the Church party, although still reserving to himself the reins of government, professedly became a simple Mexican citizen, awaiting the suffrages of the Junta to decide whether he should be re-elected as Emperor, and what course was to be followed.

The French were fully occupied by all the arrangements for the rapidly approaching embarkation of their troops, keeping entirely aloof from all

the plans adopted by the Emperor and his Council, only endeavouring to establish neutrality with the Liberals, but still compelled, from time to time, to chastise over-confident bands. Their presence could have hardly done any good to the Imperialists, beyond the fact that the towns still occupied by their troops were safe for the time being; on the contrary, the intense jealousy of foreign interference probably prevented many from joining the ranks of the Church party, who waited until the last Frenchman had turned his back on the capital, before declaring themselves.

The many rumours, besides, of an understanding entered into between the United States and Juarez operated in the most favourable manner possible. Those who, formerly averse to the French, had been, at the best, neutral observers of politics, foresaw in this policy an interference far more likely to prove fatal to Mexico than any other, and declared themselves forthwith supporters of the fortunes of the Empire and the Council.

Common danger made common friends, and alliances arose, even amongst those who a few weeks previously had been the most bitterly opposed to each other; the necessity for action became evident, and for the first time since the establishment of the Empire, honest and substantial support was given to the Government, for every one acknowledged that

the only chances for the protection of property, justice, and order, lay in the ultimate success of Maximilian.

So matters stood in the country when I left it. Since then the Emperor has gone towards the north, and now commands his army in Queretaro, having already defeated the Liberals in two engagements. Marquez holds the Valley of Mexico, and Porfirio Diaz is stationary, not acting on the offensive. In fact, it would appear that there must be an understanding between this powerful chief and the Empire, and the probabilities are that in the event of Escobedo's army being defeated, he will declare for Maximilian. If matters are otherwise, it is difficult to account for his inaction, for he certainly is strong enough to act against Puebla, or even Mexico itself. With Miramon, Marquez, Mejia, and Porfirio Diaz, the Emperor would certainly have all in his favour, the only respectable general remaining to the Liberals being Escobedo, whose influence at the present moment is decidedly on the wane. The battle to be fought is then as follows:—on the one side the dissidents, divided amongst themselves, greedy for plunder and dead to all sense of shame; on the other, Maximilian, the greater share of public favour, the money of the Church and able men at the head of his troops. The chances seem certainly in favour of the latter, and in that case

Mexico may after all become a tolerably quiet and comparatively safe country; should the Liberals gain the day, on the contrary, commerce must come to a standstill, and the way will be paved for the United States to push a little further to the south and delight the followers of Monroe.

On the 2nd of January, bidding adieu to the many kind friends I left behind in Mexico, I started for Puebla in the diligence, having previously sent on my heavy baggage, by the Austrian convoy, with De Montholon. A diligence in Europe is bad enough, but for actual and complete discomfort I can recommend the Mexican conveyances to any one curious in experiences of torture. Drawn by half-a-dozen mules, you dash along at a break-neck pace, and, the roads being in an awful state, every now and then you are sent flying up to the roof, knocking the top of your head almost in, and then being banged down again upon the seat with sufficient force to almost dislocate every joint in your body. After twenty hours of this amusement we reached Puebla, halting at Rio Frio for breakfast, and not having seen a single guerilla on the road, there being patrols of the French almost the whole way from the capital. Here I found General Douay and the head-quarters of his Division, and passed a few days with all my old friends before starting for Vera Cruz to meet De Montholon, with

whom I was going to make a journey to the United States. The time was fully occupied with a series of farewell dinners, and a ride up to Guadalupe to take a last look at the great snow-mountains and the pyramids of Cholula; at two o'clock on the morning of the 6th, I again mounted in the diligence, bid adieu to all my comrades who came to see me off, and after a long tedious day's journey—the only relief to which was the magnificent view descending the Combres—arrived late in the evening at Orizaba, lucky enough not to be stopped on the road by either guerillas or accident.

WATCHMAN OF THE CITY (SERENO).

PUEBLA DE LOS ANGELES.

CHAPTER XX.

ADIOS!

At Aculcingo, descending the Cumbres, we met the Austrian convoy just halted. It consisted of the greater part of the men who had elected to return to Europe, French troops of every regiment, long trains of carts, heavy guns laden on waggons with teams of mules almost too long to be manageable, and confusion reigning everywhere. In Orizaba, too, the numbers of soldiers about in the streets, and the works being thrown up round the town, showed

ROAD FROM VERA CRUZ TO SALTILLO.

that the evacuation was going on rapidly, and that ere long this would, in its turn, become the outpost and cover the embarkation at Vera Cruz.

After my eighteen hours' diligence travelling, I was dead beat, and should like to have gone quietly off to bed; but meeting General Clinchant, had to take a walk with him after my dinner and give him the last news from Mexico, for now that the 'Estafette' had been stopped there was very little information to be got from any source whatsoever.

Breakfasting the next day at Cordova, finding Paso del Macho almost deserted,—the Contre-Guerillas being absent on an expedition,—by dark the same evening, the 7th, I found myself at Vera Cruz, in sight of the sea again, and my journeyings almost at a close.

Yet I had to wait until the 13th, before any steamer left for the Havana; by a curious chance it happened to be the 'Impératrice Eugénie' again, not so comfortable as she was the first trip I had taken in her, for she carried a large detachment of French troops, the first returning to France from Mexico, and was so crowded, that it was next to impossible to take even a short constitutional walk on the deck, without falling over half-a-dozen people's legs.

During the six days I passed in the town, no particular news arrived from the capital; but on the very day of my arrival, the Contre-Guerillas,

now under the command of the Marquis de Gallifet, Colonel du Pin being named Commandant of Vera Cruz, had a very brilliant affair at Medellin, a town only a few leagues distant. The corps was stationed at Paso del Macho and Soledad, on the line of rail, and were, in fact, protecting it from the Liberals, who were very fond of interfering with the trains, and occasioned a great deal of delay and annoyance. M. de Gallifet had been waiting for some time, in order to strike a blow that might prevent any further trouble; and at last, hearing that a considerable band had collected at Medellin, started off immediately, surprising them completely, and driving them out with very severe loss, he having one officer and a few men wounded. This, I think, was about the last affair of the French with the dissidents, and closed the Expedition to Mexico with a success.

On the 11th, the Austrian convoy reached Paso del Macho, and on the 12th, De Montholon arrived with the pleasing intelligence that all my heavy baggage had been stolen the night before. This was certainly annoying, considering that it had been sent, for safety, with the troops; but it was no good complaining over the loss, and the only light to regard it in, was to think of the comparative pleasure of having but one portmanteau to look after for the future! Still, it was bad luck, after

escaping all through one's journeyings to the north, to be cleaned out the day before bidding adieu to Mexico.

On the 13th we steamed off, with fine weather to accompany us, to the Havana, our last view of the country being the snow-clad Peak of Orizaba, towering far above the line of mountains enclosing the Tierra Caliente; we did not lose sight of it until far out to sea, and all other traces of land had long faded away in the distance.

It will be long before I shall forget the days so pleasantly passed away in Mexico, and longer still before the recollections of the many good friends I met there are effaced from my memory. I can do no better than to quote from an article lately published in the 'Courrier des États-Unis,' in order to do justice to the French; I am sure, whoever has been in the country during the occupation, will agree with the writer, who by no means exaggerates. Speaking of the army, he says:—

"Au Mexique, ni éclat, ni grandeur, ni renommée à acquérir. Le courage y était sans retentissement et l'héroïsme obscur; pas de ces rencontres qui tiennent une place dans l'histoire et fixent l'attention des peuples; un sacrifice perpétuel non-seulement du bien-être et de la vie, mais aussi de l'amour militaire et de ce sentiment de

la gloire personnelle ou collective si cher à tous les soldats.

"Toujours à la poursuite d'un ennemi insaisissable, ils luttaient plutôt contre la nature et les souffrances physiques que contre des hommes, et leur force morale n'en fut jamais ébranlée. Qui ne se souvient des courses prodigieuses du régiment du colonel Potier dans le Michoacan? Qui ne se rappelle cette marche étonnante du colonel Jeaningros volant au secours de Monterey et faisant trente-six lieues (quatre-vingt-dix milles) en trente-huit heures? L'incroyable expédition de Chihuahua, tentée et accomplie par huit cents hommes, au milieu du désert, en pleine saison des pluies, sans chemins, sur des terres détrempées, est restée dans toutes les mémoires.

"Nos soldats n'avaient même pas la consolation de penser qu'on leur savait gré de leur résignation dans leur patrie. Ils savaient tous combien l'entreprise était impopulaire, et eux-mêmes n'éprouvaient certainement pas d'enthousiasme pour l'expédition dont ils étaient chargés. Ils n'ignoraient pas que des orateurs n'avaient pas craint d'exalter leurs adversaires à leurs dépens. Quel sentiment les a donc soutenus, et leur a permis de donner ce grand exemple d'héroïque abnégation? Le sentiment du devoir développé à sa dernière puissance et la foi au drapeau. On peut railler le fanatisme

du pavillon et définir le drapeau une loque bariolée, mais pour nos soldats il était l'emblème de leur pays, l'honneur même de la patrie remis à leur garde. D'autres pouvaient faillir ; eux avaient conscience de leur mission et aimaient mieux périr que d'y manquer. De là les mille traits héroïques que nous pourrions citer et qui sont passés presque inaperçus. De là ces détachements surpris et exterminés tout entiers plutôt que de se rendre, car il ne devait pas être dit qu'un soldat de la France s'était rendu à ses ennemis. De là ces faits d'armes dont des soldats, des sous-officiers, des lieutenants ont été les héros à peu près inconnus, et qui égalent les exploits les plus vantés. De là la fin de ce lieutenant-colonel Fistié, qui, ayant vainement cherché la mort dans le combat, préférait le suicide à l'idée d'abandonner le poste confié à ses soins.

"Lorsque les passions politiques et nationales seront apaisées, lorsqu'on pourra repasser et écrire d'un esprit calme et reposé l'histoire de l'expédition du Mexique, il n'y aura qu'une voix pour rendre hommage aux soldats de la France qui y ont pris part. L'armée du Mexique n'a rien à envier à celles de Crimée et d'Italie. Si ses hauts faits son restés dans l'ombre, elle n'en a que plus de mérite."

Yet it is generally said that the Expedition to

Mexico ought to be regarded as a mistake by the French nation. Perhaps so; at any rate, the mistake is brilliant enough to outshine many similar undertakings looked upon as great successes.

BRIDGE AT PASO DEL MACHO.

POSTSCRIPT.

It is difficult to write calmly with regard to the recent events, reported, *viâ* New York, as having taken place in Mexico.

Although all information derived from Matamoros and Brownsville is invariably to be received with distrust, it would appear that there is now little doubt to be cast on the authenticity of the news that Queretaro has been captured by the Liberals, the Imperial cause lost, and that the brave, unfortunate Maximilian has been executed by the cowardly Juarez and his followers.

On the determination of the Emperor to fight for his Crown, unassisted by foreign support, on the departure of the French troops, the Church party rallied bravely to his side and rendered the most unqualified support, but even the acuteness of their leaders was at fault with regard to the fidelity of their colleagues.

Lopez, the General entrusted with the command of the most important outpost of Queretaro, and who, for a paltry sum, has disgraced the Mexican name by betraying the Imperial cause, had been loaded with honours and favours by the Emperor, for he ranked as an earnest supporter of the new *régime* during the French occupation,—not declaring for it latterly, as Miramon and Marquez did, on the occasion of the adherence of the Church party and the departure of the foreign troops. In fact, not a doubt could have been cast on his fidelity, and generally he must have been regarded as equally trustworthy with the unfortunate Mejia, who also fought for the Empire from the very commencement; but evidently fearing the doubtful chances of success, stimulated by the base desire of wishing to save his own skin, Lopez, by selling the key of the position to Escobedo, led to the inevitable surrender of Queretaro to the Liberals at the very moment when (if the proclamation of Maximilian may be taken as authentic) everything appeared for the moment to favour the victory of the Imperial arms.

It is impossible to paint this infamous conduct in its proper colours, and difficult to figure the frightful results.

In all probability the Mexicans themselves simply look upon Lopez as a clever turncoat, an "hombre muy fino," who has played his game with skill and

forethought, for little importance is attached to treachery by them, unless it should prove unsuccessful and barren,—in that case no people are more ready to loudly condemn it; on the one hand, the unskilful perpetrator of a uselessly disgraceful act is forthwith shot like a dog, on the other, the scoundrel who succeeds is exalted as a patriot, even as a hero!

Once in the hands of the Liberals, the Imperialists had indeed but a slender chance of mercy to expect from their hands, and it is only too possible that not only the chivalrous and unfortunate Emperor has been sacrificed to the fury and lust of blood of a plebeian mob, but also much to be feared that the few Austrian and foreign officers who remained with him to the last have shared his fate.

The victim of a relentlessly pursuing fate, Maximilian has perished in consequence of his unwillingness to abandon his supporters, and avail himself of the opportunity afforded him to lay down his crown at the time of the departure of the French. To prove to the world that the chivalrous blood of the Hapsburgs ran true to all its traditions in his veins, he has sacrificed his own life and at the same time rendered the position of his party ten times worse than it was, had he, in the first instance, refused the offers of Miramon and Marquez, and left the country.

It is almost idle to imagine that the Mexicans will be punished for their unpardonable crime—the murder of Maximilian—by any European Power or Powers; but it will not be long before, in the natural course of events, the United States will overrun the country. Then the Liberals—Liberals only as far as murder, robbery, and cowardice are compromised in the interpretation of the term—will be able to judge whether the easy yoke of Maximilian and the wonderful forbearance of the French occupation are in any way comparable, in point of severity, with the avowed policy of extermination, and the stern justice of the rough-handed filibusters who, crossing the Rio Grande, will look simply on the country as a land of promise, and be ready, with fire and with sword, to take to themselves all the milk and the honey, all the corn, the wine, and the oil.

And the judgment, in this case, will be no more than strictly just.

July 4th, 1867.

ADDENDA.

TABLE OF MARCHES BETWEEN VERA CRUZ AND MEXICO.

(*Distances in Mexican Leagues of Four Kilometres.*)

Vera Cruz to—		
Paso del Macho .		By Imperial Mexican Railroad; four or five hours' journey.
Cordova . . .	9.	Town, hotel; bad road.
Orizaba . . .	6.	Large town, good hotel; bad road.
Aculcingo . .	8.	Village; no accommodation; road better.
Cañada . . .	7.	Cross the Cumbres; very steep and tiring; large village.
Palmar . . .	6.	Road deep in sand and dust; good hotel.
Aculzingo . .	8.	Road better; large village; no hotel.
Amozoc . . .	9.	Fair road.
Puebla	4.	Good road; large city.
St. Martin . .	8.	Good road; small town.
Rio Frio . . .	10.	Steep ascents; hotel; very cold, and the water dangerous for horses.
Buena Vista . .	5.	Descend into Valley of Mexico.
Mexicalcingo .	5.	Pass lakes; dirty village.
Mexico . . .	3.	Dusty deep road.
	88	leagues from Paso del Macho.

The diligence, leaving Mexico early in the morning, arrives late in the evening at Puebla; leaves again at 1.30 A.M., and reaches Orizaba about 8 P.M.; and starting from Orizaba at 4 A.M., arrives about the middle of the day at Paso de Macho; that is, supposing the weather be fine, without rain, and no extraordinary causes of delay taking place.

TABLE OF MARCHES BETWEEN MEXICO AND SALTILLO.

Mexico to—		
Tlalnepantla . .	3.	Large village; good road.
Cuatitlan . . .	4.	Small town; good road.
Tepeji del Rio .	7.	Small town; rough road; bad pass.
San Francisco .	6½.	Village; rough road; steep.
Arroyo Zarco .	5½.	Hacienda; hotel; bad road.
Soledad . . .	5.	Hacienda; bad road.
St. Juan del Rio .	8.	Clean, pretty town; rough road; dust.
Colorado . . .	9.	Hacienda; almost in ruins; deep sand.
Queretaro . . .	7.	Fine city; bad road.
Montenegro . .	5.	Fine hacienda; very bad road.
St. Diego . . .	6.	Good hacienda; part of road good.
La Noria . . .	6.	Good hacienda; good road.
St. Luis de la Paz	7.	Dirty town; tolerable road.
La Sousada . .	8½.	Fine hacienda; good road.
La Villela . .	7.	Large village; bad road.
Santa Maria del Rio	4½.	Pretty town; dangerous pass; bad road.

Las Pilas . . .	8½.	Rough road; large hacienda.
St. Luis Potosi .	4½.	Large city; good road.
Garabatillos* .	5.	Wretched village; very deep dust.
Peñasco† . . .	6.	Fine hacienda; tolerable road.
Las Boccas . .	{5.* / 6.†}	Large hacienda; fair road.
Moctezuma, or Hedionda . .	8.	Small town; good road.
Venado . . .	5½.	Town; tolerable road.
Charcas . . .	5½.	Nice town; rough road.
Laguna Secca .	5.	Hacienda; good road.
Guadalupe . .	9.	Small town; bad supply of water; the road deep in sand.
La Presa . . .	5.	Ruined hacienda; lake; bad road in wet weather; almost impassable in places.
Matehuala . .	4.	Large town; fair road.
Las Vanegas . .	9.	Hacienda; good road; water.
Las Animas . .	8.	Fair road; only one well, and that often dry; hacienda.
Salado	6.	One well only; hacienda.
San Salvador .	5.	Village; very little water; one well.
Encarnacion . .	10.	Hacienda; water very bad; two wells.
Tanqué de la Vaca	5.	Pond of dirty water; no houses.
Agua Nueva . .	7.	Village; spring and two wells bad road.
Saltillo	7½.	Large town.

Either of these (* †) can be taken.

TABLE OF MARCHES FROM SALTILLO TO MONTEREY.

Saltillo to— Santa Maria	5.	Good road; large hacienda.
Rinconada	7.	Hacienda in ruins; rough road.
Los Muertos	6.	Wretched village; fair road.
Monterey	5.	Good road.
	23 leagues.	

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